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(DE)COMPOSING A GARDEN FOR CHILDREN'S PLAY

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Debra Jean Deverell

August 2009

Advisor: Dr. Elinor Katz

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Author: Debra Jean Deverell
Title: (DE)COMPOSING A GARDEN FOR CHILDREN'S PLAY
Advisor: Dr. Elinor Katz
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Abstract

Kindergarten has been a part the educational landscape of the United States since 1856, when the first kindergarten opened in Watertown, Wisconsin. If we fast-forward more than a century and a half to the present, it is clear that the landscape composition of the garden — ideologically, culturally, socially, and politically for children's play —has drastically changed.

The purpose of this study, *(De)Composing a Garden for Children's Play*, is to examine kindergartners' play set against changing school policies and practices of recent years in one Colorado school district. Four research questions guided this inquiry:

1. What does kindergarten look like in this school district?
2. What is the current state of play in the kindergarten classroom?
3. Are teachers establishing practices responsive to the cognitive, social and emotional well-being of kindergartners, while at the same time adhering to the requirements of the district and/or state and federal government?
4. How do contemporary kindergartners themselves reflect upon or view the kinds (and amount) of play which they engage in within the school day?

Elliot Eisner's model of Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism was the qualitative method utilized throughout this study. Data was collected over seven months during the 2008-09 academic year.

Friedrich Froebel's ideal, of kindergarten as a garden for children's play, has changed over time due to myriad reasons. One is the entire transfer of kindergarten from a private entity to the K-12 public education arena since World War II.

Another change in kindergarten education can be traced to changes in educational policy in the "age of accountability." As a result, more curriculum is presented to students at a younger age. The urge to "get it covered" was felt by each of the teachers in this study, in that they all alluded to the pressures of curricular coverage.

It is little surprise that more time was dedicated to "work" and less time was devoted to free "play." Further research possibilities include: exploration of preschool settings in the age of accountability as well as a closer look into pre-service and in-service education on the value of play for educators.

Acknowledgements

*You can discover more about a person
in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.*

Plato

At the University of Denver I benefited from numerous thoughtful conversations with professors and members of the mountain cohort; all stretched my thinking, knowledge, and appreciation of education. I want to add a special thank you to my committee: Dr. Susan Korach, Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher, and my advisor and inspiring mentor, Dr. Elinor Katz.

My debts to the scholars in the field of play are listed within the reference section; all nudged my perceptions and understandings, and under their tutelage I learned much. This undertaking could not have happened without all the students and colleagues I have been blessed and privileged to work with over the past twenty-nine years. It is by watching, wondering, questioning, listening, and playing with students that this thesis came to life. A special thank-you to Vail Mountain School and primarily Peter Abuisi who granted me the “gift of time” to complete my research endeavors.

My family has always valued education and because of their gentle pushing, questioning, and immense support, in far too many ways to count, I have completed this task. Thanks to my brother Bill, chief critic and proof reader extraordinaire. And to my primary supporters, my parents — Marne and Bill, your belief that I could finish kept me going; with much love and gratitude.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Experience has shown that when children have a chance at physical activities which bring their natural impulses into play, going to school is a joy, management is less of a burden, and learning is easier.

John Dewey

It is a beautiful autumn day in Vail, Colorado. At the school where I work, kindergarten and first-grade children are at recess. I notice them running, bumping into one another and yelling, “Hurry, get away...run!” I watch closer and see them twirling and hitting each other with such force that they fall to the ground. “What are you playing?” I ask. “Katrina,” they reply.

I am immediately reminded of the power of play and the opportunity it allows children to work through complex concepts and, as often, their fears, emotions, and the troubling images they are continually exposed to in contemporary society. By “playing Katrina,” the children were able to make at least some sense of the multiple tragedies that they witnessed through the news and recounted for them by their new friends: several displaced children from New Orleans who, with their families had been taken in by the school and the wider community. I often have replayed that playground scene in my mind since the fall of 2005, and I’ve wondered how different it would have been if those children were not given the opportunity on that day (and many others) to “play Katrina.”

The role of play in child development is both well studied and theorized (see, for example, Bergen, 2002; Christie and Johnsen, 1983; Frost, 1998; Pellegrini, 2001;

Sutton-Smith, 1979; Weber, 1969). As Frost (1998) has noted in a fairly typical observation,

Children's imaginative or make-believe play is a powerful medium for socialization, allowing them to simplify a complicated world and make otherwise complex and frightening events manageable and comprehensible. Such play also assists the development of cooperation, sharing, negotiating and problem solving skills, and helps the child to get along in an increasingly complex world. (p.10)

Frost further states that various scholarly disciplines, including biology, neuroscience and psychology, view play as fundamental to human development — much like sleep, food and rest. Friedrich Froebel, the creator of the earliest kindergarten, recognized the value of play in *The Education of Man* (1887). He reported that just as chemists and physiologists had ascertained the role of bread and meat in the sustenance of humans, he had determined the place of play in the growth of the child's mind.

Play has been a part of early childhood education programs since the initial kindergarten was developed by Froebel in Germany in 1837 (Wortham, 2002).

Kindergarten — itself a word coined by Froebel from combining the German words for *children* and *garden* — involved singing, dancing, storytelling, nature study and play, and, became widely popular in the nineteenth century in Europe, the United States and Japan. Froebel is credited with identifying the educational importance of play and the value of “self-active” participation as opposed to the passive, receptive instruction of the past (Graham, 1983). Froebel (1887) viewed play as both an educational necessity and something of far greater importance:

Play is the purest, the most spiritual, product of man at this stage, and is at once the prefiguration and imitation of the total human life of the inner, secret, natural life in man and in all things. It produces therefore, joy, freedom, satisfaction;

repose within and without, peace with the world. The springs of all good rest within it and go out from it. (p. 30)

Play and the Legislative Arena

On January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind initiative (NCLB) was signed into law by President George W. Bush, whose administration immediately proclaimed the act to be “the most sweeping reform of federal education policy in a generation” (White House News Release, 2002, January). The legislation focuses on increasing public school accountability and benchmark progress in regard to student proficiency in reading and math. This mandate began with excellent intentions: to provide equal opportunity for all children, regardless of economic background, to receive the best education possible. Yet for many states (and thus schools and school districts), this concept of accountability and standards is made manifest by high-stakes standardized testing. Standards are shared expectations or goals for learning, and the field of early childhood education has a history of establishing standards for even the youngest of learners.

Standards in and of themselves do not necessarily pose a challenge to kindergarten teachers or other early childhood educators. In recent years, as standards have become an increasingly important feature of the American educational environment, discussions surrounding standards have become more multifaceted and, as a result, more puzzling. If learning standards delineate the skills to be learned, they should not include prescriptive recommendations for instructional practices. It appears as though with the recent push for accountability, kindergarten teachers are faced with precisely such prescriptive recommendations for instruction. In the wake of such developments, the use

of play, developmentally appropriate practices, and integrated studies within the kindergarten classroom seemingly have been abandoned.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandated the implementation of statewide accountability systems in reading and mathematics and annual testing to assess mastery of those standards for all public school students in grades three through eight. Although the primary grades and kindergarten were not included in this NCLB legislation, concerns about preparing children to enter the third grade with the necessary skills to pass the test have doubtlessly affected children even in the earliest grade levels.

Public schools must publish scores from these assessments in annual report cards accessible to the general public. To be sure, accountability for teaching children is not a new concept. But the penalty for not showing adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the law is a new reality for public schools.

The mandated push to score well is felt throughout public schools across the nation. Consequences for failing schools include the provision of funding for students to secure supplemental education services of their choosing, allowing students to transfer to better performing public schools, as well as the possibility for the take-over of public schools by private entities.

The immense pressure on public schools (administrators, teachers, and students alike) across the country to prepare third graders for high-stakes testing may have a direct impact on the culture and methodology in both the kindergarten and preschool classroom. By starting the ‘formal education’ process earlier, schools have gained an extra year of

instruction. Stipek (2006) in her article, “No Child Left Behind Comes to Preschool,” writes, “No Child Left Behind (NCLB) testing begins at third grade. The effects of legislation are beginning to be felt in preschools because policy makers believe that an early start on developing academic skills will help children reach the standards they are expected to achieve in elementary school” (p.455). The caution is that overly narrow standards in K-12 education that are being pushed down to apply to the youngest of children in a school setting (well below the third grade level), may do more damage than good and may be totally inappropriate. As Miller (2005) states, “With the great emphasis placed on academic accountability as a result of the NCLB mandates and a fear of funding being withheld if schools do not ‘measure up’ academically, the social and emotional growth of kindergartners is sometimes unintentionally de-emphasized” (p.259). Howard Gardner (2006) points out that the “United States had moved forward uniform curricula, tests, and standards, while progressively tinted education is on the defensive” (p. 86). This trend is likely to continue unless school districts, superintendents, parents and teachers (with specific reference to kindergarten teachers insofar as this thesis is concerned) identify and implement pedagogical strategies that allow them to maintain teaching in developmentally appropriate ways *and* satisfy the new state and federal mandates.

In the following thesis, I am concerned with the impact (real or imagined) of this legislation within kindergarten classrooms; especially as such impact pertains to children’s play. The dilemma now facing kindergarten teachers simply can be stated: how do they meet the demands of standardized tests while maintaining age-appropriate

practices which best serve the developmental needs of their students? What are the levels of pedagogical, even philosophical, contradiction within our schools in the post-NCLB world?

Two imperatives are certain: schools are faced with growing demands for teacher accountability and measurable outcomes from students. Given this, and given the apparent contradictions, do teachers defy school policy by maintaining an embrace upon less rigid approaches or outcomes? Are kindergarten teachers hemmed in by the obligation to teach students a standardized, mandated curriculum comprised of predetermined academic skills and content with a prescriptive script? Is there any flexibility to offer developmentally appropriate learning experiences based on each student's unique learning needs and styles? Do teachers set aside their convictions on best practices in the kindergarten classroom? Can kindergarten classrooms achieve a balance between mandated rigor and pedagogical flexibility?

Within the context of such questions, I explored three kindergarten classrooms housed within three schools in the same school district and carefully observed to ascertain if anything had been eliminated in the current core kindergarten curriculum to make way for paper/pencil tasks in anticipation of an imminent testing regime. Time was spent trying to discover if there was a decrease in the amount of free play and free exploration provided and a concomitant increase in teaching math and literacy skills. Do reading, writing, workbooks, and worksheets take up more time in kindergarten, and consequently, does play take up less time? An essential research question within this thesis can be stated thusly: as the developmental role, even necessity, of play is made

increasingly clear through scholarly research, have there been detrimental consequences of this legislated insistence on more formal academic standards at play's ultimate expense?

To state the obvious and proven: play is exceedingly important in the lives of children. Play provides opportunities for the development of agility, physical strength, and coping skills; but it also provides children an avenue to work out and further develop their emotions, thoughts, and cognitive mastery.

While test-taking may have its utilities (however crude), it is abundantly clear that students in the 21st century need the skills of abstract and divergent thinking; the ability to work collaboratively on teams; the ability to synthesize data; and the ability to speak in more than a single language (see, for example, Wallis and Steptoe, December 18, 2006). The multiple-choice tests that most children are being prepared to take promote instruction and learning processes but fail to develop the critical and creative thinking and reasoning skills children need to prepare them for a global society.

Pink (2005) writes about the "imagination economy." His premise is that the future workforce needs to be able to do something that cannot be outsourced, nor automated but needs instead to possess the skills for innovative design and story. He advocates for six aptitudes or "six senses." Design. Story. Symphony. Empathy. Play. Meaning. He calls for more emphasis on the skills from the right side of the brain. He believes that, "The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind — creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. These people — artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big

picture thinkers — will now reap society’s richest rewards and share its greatest joys” (p.1).

Many of these attributes are discovered and enhanced through play. If we want children to thrive in the “imagination economy” of the future, how can we deny them opportunities for creativity and play in today’s kindergarten settings?

Free Play and Recess

The most obvious time when play can be observed in schools is at recess time. Pellegrini and Smith (1993) found that recess does have a direct link to learning. First, recess provides a much needed respite from seat-work and academic tasks. Second, productive play at recess is generally a positive predictor of children’s (especially boys’) social and cognitive development. Pellegrini and Smith found recess to have educational value and considerable educational relevance.

Yet too many schools are narrowing playtime or eliminating it all together. Kozol (2007) states that in “order to gain extra time to prep their students for exams; some urban districts have, in recent years, gone to the extreme of taking recess from their children. In Atlanta, schools have been intentionally constructed with no playgrounds, so that no time can be wasted on activities that will not raise the scores” (p.113). A 1989 survey taken by the National Association of Elementary School Principals found 96 percent of surveyed school systems had at least one recess period. However, another survey a decade later found that only 70 percent of kindergartens have recess (Ginsburg, 2006).

In a recent study conducted in Texas, Booher-Jennings (2005) noted that many kindergarten and primary teachers “decided to reduce their classes’ recess to fifteen minutes per week to provide more time for academic instruction” (p. 255).

There are various reasons for the decline of recess in America’s schools: lawsuits; parental fears; the organized sports movement; technological games; and the increase of high-stakes testing. One can only speculate what the results from a survey conducted in 2009 with the legislation of No Child Left Behind reveal about the amount of recess kindergarten students might have today. Has play diminished from kindergarten classrooms (or has it been eliminated altogether?) and if so, what are the pedagogical, emotional, and intellectual consequences of such shifts?

Child advocate and child psychologist David Elkind recently published a book entitled *The Power of Play* (2007). He demonstrates throughout that play is what gets children ready for learning in the first place. He has found that children are no longer allowed to play on their own to the extent that they once were. Much of their play is organized and run by adults. This robs children of the opportunities to problem solve and settle disputes with peers or to invent social or other situations with their own rules and regulations. Penny Wilson, a playworker in the United Kingdom, was recently interviewed for the *America Journal of Play* and stated,

It is particularly vital that parents understand the need for their children to play. It is they who create the time and space for their children, they who decide to allow kids to play together after school and on weekends rather than cramming their every waking minute full of activities structures by adults. I think there is growing pressure on parents to over structure their children’s time. (p. 278)

Children today are far more passive than the generations of children before them; for example, they spend much more time playing electronic games than playing outside, which itself is linked to extraordinarily high rates of childhood obesity in America. Electronic game-playing in the solitary confines of one's own (generally indoor) space robs children of the value of social play. Unstructured free play provides exposure to conflict resolution and problem solving with other people that electronic game play (or its technological older sibling, television-watching) does not.

Other Factors

Running parallel to the reality of testing in America's public schools is the push from schools and parents for kindergartners (and even preschoolers) to perform academic tasks before they are ready for such endeavors (Elkind, 1981; Jeynes, 2006; Jones & Reynolds, 1992). David Elkind coined the phrase, "the hurried child" in his 1981 book of the same title to describe this phenomenon. Elkind's premise is simple: there are dangers in expecting children to feel, think, and behave like miniature adults. This isn't necessarily a new phenomenon. As Weber (1969) argued in her book, *The Kindergarten*:

Only when parents, ever anxious to have their children become literate at an early age, put pressure upon the kindergarten, was the question of reading discussed. It was readily recognized that children could learn to read at an early age; the crucial point was whether it should be given high priority in the development of kindergarten children. (p. 95)

Controversy also abounds over when to start kindergarten. Many states are reexamining entrance or birthday cut-off dates. Weil (2007) reports that:

Since 1975, nearly half of all states have pushed back their birthdays cutoffs and four —California, Michigan, North Carolina, and Tennessee —have active legislation in state assemblies to do so right now. (Arkansas passes legislation

earlier this spring; New Jersey, which historically has let local districts establish their birthday cutoffs, has legislation pending to make September 1 the cutoff throughout the state.) This is due, in part, to the accountability movement—the high-stakes testing now pervasive in the American educational system.

Many incoming kindergartners have been “red-shirted” (a term borrowed from sports to describe the postponement of entrance into kindergarten to allow for further physical, intellectual, emotional, or social growth to take place prior to matriculation). Shepard and Smith (1988) found that the belief held by many is that if children start kindergarten later, they will be not only a year older but better able to handle the demands of a more academic curriculum. This, in turn, further devalues the importance of play. As Elkind (2007) argues, “Parents, anxious for their children to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy regard play as a luxury that the contemporary child cannot afford” (p.ix). In this thesis, I hope to dispel this belief and further demonstrate the value of play for the contemporary kindergarten child.

Statement of the Problem

In October of 2006 The American Academy of Pediatrics published a position paper entitled, “The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds.” The report suggests that to ensure healthy development, children need more old-fashioned playtime and unstructured time to play, not more over-scheduling in various after-school activities. The power of play allows for creativity, discovery, negotiation, sharing, taking turns, and self-advocacy skills; life-long skills for all. Ginsburg (2006) states, “Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength.

Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them” (p.3).

Does the current school reform movement, namely NCLB, impede that process through its primary focus on testing and testing results? Juxtaposition arises: more time is needed for academics to ensure that no child is left behind and that all are making adequate yearly process, yet time is needed to elaborate the play process. Does “the most sweeping reform of federal education policy in a generation” (White House News Release, 2002, January) honor children by allowing them to be children through play?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe what current educational practice and demands have imposed on today’s kindergarten programs. The following thesis analyzes one Colorado school district’s interpretation of NCLB legislation and follows that interpretation into practice within three kindergarten classroom settings. Of special interest will be the ways in which individual teachers include their own beliefs about educational best practices within the institutional expectations of increased academic achievement. Another focus of the study will involve the kindergartners themselves and how they reflect upon or view play within the school setting.

Research Questions

Four primary questions guide the following investigation:

1. What does kindergarten look like in this school district?
2. What is the current state of play in the kindergarten classroom?

3. Are teachers establishing practices responsive to the cognitive, social and emotional well-being of kindergartners, while at the same time adhering to the requirements of the district and/or the state and federal government?
4. How do contemporary kindergartners themselves reflect upon or view the kinds (and amount) of play which they engage in within the school day?

Rationale

Pretend play has a role in classrooms. It helps with perspective taking, cognitive development, and language acquisition. As Director of Lower School in an independent day school, I have the flexibility to create programs based on student academic, social, and emotional needs.

One example of such flexibility concerns the rising divorce rate in our school. This phenomenon led me to collaborate with our consulting psychologist to plan and implement a support group for children experiencing divorce. After a few sessions of our group meetings, I observed the children on the playground. A brother and sister from the divorce group were playing with a half dozen other children. I was keenly aware that all were involved in a heated discussion. As I listened in, I heard the young girl assigning roles say, “You are the judge, and you are the mom, and you are the dad, and you are the brother, and you are the sister. Don’t cry too much because you only have one week to make your final decision.”

Does make believe play help children understand, and even navigate reality? Fromberg (2002) repeatedly supports this notion by expressing that play is a window through which we can see how children develop and represent meaning.

Personalizing the Work

My life's work has been in education. My pursuit of a doctorate has been facilitated by listening to conversations and literally watching children play. This study is based on my own quest to understand the complexities, nuances, and subtleties of the current state of play in kindergarten classrooms. I am in agreement with Brian Sutton-Smith (Play Matters lecture, Rochester, New York, April 27, 2007) who proclaims that "Play is life-affirming and needed as emotional survival."

Meaningful play provides children with safe arenas for working through novel, puzzling, exciting, and disturbing content they encounter through their day. As children play many of their emotional needs are met — trust, autonomy, mastery, and competence. Such opportunities are fundamental in developing feelings of well-being and positive self-esteem. As a proponent of play in kindergarten, I hope to articulate to educators, policy makers, practitioners, parents and researchers just how important play is. *Play* is the basis for further learning, rather than memorizing and demonstrating by rote the competencies targeted as official benchmarks for early childhood education. Play matters.

Research Method

To accomplish the aims of this study, the researcher went to three kindergarten classrooms during October 2008 through May 2009 and spent more than one hundred hours gathering information about each school, its history, and its respective mission and practices. The type of research methodology that best fits this kind of study is qualitative research, and I have been guided by the Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism research method. This method was developed by Elliot Eisner and requires that the

researcher take on both the role of connoisseur and the role of critic (1998). This method requires the researcher to describe, interpret, evaluate, and document themes that emerge from the data. Using this method, the research data provide the reader with an in-depth understanding and vivid visualization of three kindergarten classrooms and their use of play to enhance cognitive development, language acquisition, and problem solving capacity. As a researcher, my aim was to describe, interpret, evaluate, and document themes that emerge from the data.

Throughout the research process, teachers' perspectives, the teacher's role, curriculum, accountability, staff development, and children's perspectives were examined through interviews, classroom observation, and document collection. Perspectives of the school principal on these same issues were examined through interviews. In addition, I interviewed the district superintendent and curriculum director. Further, the mission of each school and classroom was reviewed: this included study of school or classroom generated literature as well as letters written to parents by school personnel.

Organization of the Study

This study is composed of eight chapters and describes and interprets play found in the three kindergarten classrooms under study. Chapter One summarizes the importance of studying play and provides background information and the statement and significance of this topic of investigation.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature. The chapter opens with the presentation of the importance of fantasy or imaginative play for children; it moves toward a definition of play; research on play and academic performance; and includes a

timeline of the various theories of play and contributing theorists. Those first contributors to early childhood education include Froebel, Montessori, and Dewey. Chapter Two addresses the history of kindergarten in America, current research studies about play in kindergarten classrooms, and the current state of kindergartens in America. A section on Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) and studies that delve into teacher perception on the recent legislative mandates on education today in kindergartens completes this chapter.

Chapter Three delineates the Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism qualitative research methodology. Chapter Four provides the reader with a background on the school district studied and their initiatives on the implementation of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme in all of its schools and the school district's participation in the Colorado Department of Education's *Success for all Students* grant (a pseudonym).

Chapters Five through Seven describe the profiles of the three schools and three classrooms selected for this study. In Chapter Eight, I provide a summary and a discussion of the data, provide themes regarding the current state of kindergarten in this school district, draw conclusions on the current state of play, and end with recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Children, of necessity, develop from both the inside out and the outside in.

Elliot Eisner

What is Play?

Fall 2006. Yet another school tragedy occurs. An armed intruder enters a school and kills a high school student. This time the incident is in Bailey, Colorado, less than 100 miles from Vail. The incident has made critical our obligation to practice a school-wide ‘lock-down.’ The Crisis Committee convenes and plans the sequence of events. We start grade by grade and practice as individual classes with much discussion. Parents are notified prior to the practice and encouraged to be prepared for questions that their children may have about the events. We then practice a school-wide lock-down involving the entire emergency team from Vail: police, fire-fighters, ambulance, SWAT team, and alternative transportation sources. The drill is completed to the satisfaction of the team. The drill leaves the school in a somber state all day.

Later that week I am approached by a parent of a first-grader whom we will refer to as Emily. Emily’s mom states that the day after the lock-down practice, Emily had invited a friend over to play. The child was a new guest to Emily’s home; the mother listened in and monitored the budding friendship. She heard the girls negotiating on what to play. After some give and take, they settled on a choice: They played ‘lock-down’ for the entire afternoon. What does this fascinating choice of play illustrate?

Defining the construct of play presents difficulties (Chudacoff, 2007; Saracho & Spodek, 1998; Smith, 1986; Sutton-Smith, 1979). The exact definition of play is elusive, but we probably all know it when we see it. On the other hand, play may look simple, but it is actually a complex human behavior (Fromberg, 2002). Weininger (1979) describes play in the following excerpt:

Play is not merely a form of activity. It is through play that the young child recreates the world and comes to understand it; his play is predicated on his experiences. Play is not aimless or purposeless or undirected. It is the child's attempt to achieve, to feel comfortable, and hence to be able to innovate and change his world. (p. 5)

Roles in play are continually changing and evolving; stories unravel in the process.

Where else but in fantasy play can children dress up, make and use props, create storylines to act out, use novel and sophisticated language, and negotiate and exchange information to see the world through a new lens? Vivian Gussin Paley has spent a career watching and listening to children play. As she eloquently states (2004), "Play is the model for the life-long practice of trying out new ideas. Pretending is the most open-ended of all activities, providing the opportunity to escape the limitations of established rituals. Pretending enables us to ask 'what if?' (p. 92).

The theory on children's play is diverse and has been shaped by a multitude of disciplines. Much of this theory can be described in terms of the *rhetoric of play as progress*; the supposition that play is a contributing factor to human development (Sutton-Smith, 1979). A single definition of play cannot capture the multiple meanings of the word. Like a garden, play is made up of varieties of textures, hues, and component

parts; it is multifaceted. Play helps children thrive in the present. Meaningful play is vital to healthy social development. Levin (1996) states,

Without rich and meaningful play, the whole process of actively transforming experience into meaningful cognitive knowledge can suffer. Children are denied a central vehicle for experimenting with new ideas, developing skills, building new ideas onto what is already known, and generalizing from what is known to new and varied situations. Children are also put at a disadvantage in developing the tools they will need for later learning. (p. 85)

Play can also take a negative turn; it can lead to hurt feelings, misunderstanding, and exclusion. This does not trouble Sutton-Smith (1997): in play culture, both negative and positive aspects are of importance. He believes through trickery, dishonesty, and foul play children learn necessary skills for successful human relationships, such as marriage, business and war.

When nudged for a definition of play by *American Play Journal*, Stuart Brown replied,

You're putting me on the spot, but how does this sound for now? Play is an ancient, voluntary, inherently pleasurable, apparently purposeless activity of process that is undertaken for its own sake and that strengthens our muscles and our social skills, fertilizes brain activity, tempers and deepens our emotions, takes us out of time, and enables a state of balance and poise. (p. 412)

For this study, my operational definition of play is an open-ended activity that affords children opportunities to try out new ideas, concepts, and language in a non-threatening environment. As a researcher, Smilansky's continuum of play was used when analyzing how contemporary kindergartners themselves reflect upon or view the kinds (and amount) of play in which they engage within the school day.

The Importance of Play

Brown further elaborated on the importance of play. He conducted a study in Texas which looked at the motivation behind the 1966 University of Texas shooting by Charles Whitman. After studying Whitman's life, it was determined that he had had a *play-less* childhood; therefore, he could not navigate or negotiate social situations normally. A childhood without the give and take of play situations left him completely unprepared to cope with stress; eventually, he exploded (Brown, 2009). Brown stated:

The perpetrator in the Virginia Tech incident was socially isolated as a child and bullied by classmates. The profile of almost all campus shooters seems to include chronic humiliation, a sense of powerlessness, and a set of precipitating stresses either real or imagined. These were present in Whitman, they were present in other murderers I've studied, and ostensibly they were present in the Virginia Tech shooter as well as in those at Columbine and other locations. (p. 402)

Brown continued in this interview to stress that the creative outlet of play generates resilience and curiosity; it produces both joy and optimism. He elaborated further by stating, "Play usually involves our proprioception—our sense of ourselves moving in space and this sense is rich and pleasurable and offers us a release" (p. 406).

Play and Learning

As one recent study by Isenberg and Quisenberry (2002) stated succinctly:

A recent explosion of research on the brain and learning also delineate the importance of play. We know that active brains make permanent neurological connections critical to learning; inactive brains do not make the necessary permanent neurological connections. Research on the brain demonstrates that play is a scaffold for development, a vehicle for increasing neural structures, and a means by which all children practice skills they will need later in life.

Play is a means to process information and consolidate knowledge. Play provides new tools for thinking. Imaginative and fantasy play have a place in kindergarten classrooms.

Brown, also president of the National Institute for Play, recent spoke at the New York Public Library on the value of play. Play enables children to learn to trust and to develop empathy and positive social skills. According to Robin Marantz Henig (2008 February 17), a reporter for the *New York Times*,

Parents bobble between a nostalgia-infused yearning for their children to play and fear that time spent playing is time lost to more practical pursuits. Alarming headlines about U.S. students falling behind other countries in science and math, combined with the ever-more-intense competition to get kids into college, make parents rush to sign up their children for piano lessons and test-prep courses instead of just leaving them to improvise on their own; playtime versus resume building.

Play is central to neurological growth and development— it is a way in which children build multifaceted, skilled, alert, socially skilful and cognitively flexible brains.

Play and Academic Performance

Pellegrini (1980) reported that a kindergartner's level of play predicts academic achievement. Smilansky (1968) described a continuum of play: *functional play*: the child simply exercises his or her muscles; *constructive play*: the child creates something; *dramatic play*: the child uses language to take on a pretend role; and *games-with-rules*: the child's play is secondary to a rearranged set of rules. He coded the types of play children engaged in and noted that dramatic play was the most commonly coded play category, followed by constructive and functional play in the kindergartners he studied. He then measured prereading and language achievement using the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test. The study suggested that the skills used in higher categories of play were also required in reading and writing. He writes: "Administrators and teachers of young

children concerned with students' standardized test performance should create an environment that allows children to engage in many forms of free play" (p. 535).

Smilansky's research, *The Effects of Sociodramatic Play on Disadvantaged Preschool Children* (1968), presented data showing that certain children do not proceed step-by-step through the generally recognized stages of play (functional, constructive, dramatic, and games-with-rules). These children, whom she labeled "disadvantaged," seem to skip dramatic or socio-dramatic play to the detriment of their later school achievement.

In *Scientific American Mind*, Melinda Wenner (2009, January 28), wrote an article entitled, "The Serious Need for Play." In that article she writes about a classic study published in *Developmental Psychology* in 1973:

Researchers divided 90 preschool children into three groups. One group was told to play freely with four common objects— among the choices were a pile of paper towels, a screwdriver, a wooden board and a pile of paperclips. A second set was asked to imitate an experimenter using the four objects in common ways. The last group was told to sit at a table and draw whatever they wanted, without ever seeing the objects. Each scenario lasted 10 minutes. Immediately afterward, the researchers asked the children to come up with ideas for how one of the objects could be used. The kids who had played with the objects names, on average, three times as many nonstandard, creative uses for the objects than the youths in either of the other two groups did, suggesting that play fosters creative thinking.

Classical Theories and Theorists on Play

To attempt to understand play we need to take a look at the roots of play theory, the theorists and the context of time in which they made their belief statements. The classical theories of play were developed at the turn of the century and were influenced by Charles Darwin's (1859) work on natural selection. Early theorists attempted to

understand play in terms of biological and physiological functions. The classical theorists wanted to know why play existed and what purpose it served. The following table outlines each of the four major classical theories, the major proponent of the theory, and the date of the theory.

Table 2.1.
Classical Theories and Theorists on Play

Theory	Proponent	Date
Surplus energy theory of play	Spencer	1873
Relaxation and recreation theory of play	Lazarus	1883
Practice (or pre-exercise) theory of play	Gross	1901
Recapitulation theory of play	Hall	1906

Pleasure and enthusiasm seem to be universal characteristics of play. The surplus energy theory of play hypothesized that a child plays to rid him— or her of excess energy. According to this theory, all living things (human as well as animals) generate ample energy to fulfill their survival needs; therefore, whatever extra (surplus) energy exists is eliminated through the action of play. In an advancing society, basic survival needs were met, therefore children had extra energy. Herbert Spenser (1873) saw this as surplus energy that needed an outlet and the form it took was play. According to Sluss (2004):

There are three reasons why scholars no longer recognize the surplus energy theory as a viable theory. First, no research exists to support these claims. This theory was based on the premise that children play until exhausted and then quit, but we all know children who appear to be exhausted and then perk up when they notice something novel. Second, it is not supported by Darwinian knowledge. If all members of a species were engaged in nonproductive activities, the species would disappear. This also places animals and children in one category and this might not be justifiable. Finally, the logic itself does not support the argument. If

a young puppy or a young child runs to catch something that is thrown, it can be classified as work or play. If it is work, they are using energy. If it is play, they are ridding themselves of energy. So, the reason for play would also be a reason for work. (p. 44)

The opposite theory of surplus energy is the relaxation and recreation theory of play. It asserts that play is necessary to re-energize or replenish human cognition. This theory is credited to Moritz Lazarus (1883) from Germany. He believed that work made one fatigued and that to regain energy one needed to play or engage in recreational activities for renewal.

The third classical theory of play is the practice (or pre-exercise) theory of play. Karl Gross (1901) is credited with this theory. He saw in the play-fighting of animals and the imitative behavior of children a preparation for adult activities. He also thought that children's play changed as they aged and developed. He classified different stages of play:

- experimental play (games with rules),
- socioeconomic play (rough-and-tumble play),
- imitative, social, and family games (dramatic play).

In this theory, children practice roles that they will use in the future. This theory is currently supported by constructivist theories which view play as an avenue to develop children's intellectual performance.

The recapitulation theory, credited to G. Stanley Hall (1906) links childhood play with Darwin's theory of evolution. Hall proposed the following different stages of animal/human development:

- animal stage (swinging and climbing),
- savage stage (hunting, tag),
- nomad stage,
- agricultural or patriarch stage,
- tribal stage.

Hall hypothesized that these stages of play freed children from any primitive characteristics that would be viewed as unsuitable for current culture. Sluss (2004) states that

Hall's work has come under a great deal of scrutiny due to Hall's belief in racial recapitulation. His view was criticized by the scientific community when it was published at the turn of the twentieth century. Today his theory is viewed as not only erroneous, but also harmful due to the racist nature of his views. Hall believed that children were the missing link in evolution from animal to human; he believed that the entire history of the entire human race could be observed in the child's developing play. (p. 46)

Hall's work flounders on several critical points. Most glaringly, there is no evidence to support this theory. Each individual child is unique. All children do not develop in uniform ways. All children do not go through all the stages proposed by Hall. The classical theories of play can be matched as pairs:

- surplus energy theory with recreational/relaxation theory,
- practice/pre-exercise theory with recapitulation theory.

Each pair has opposing views and each pair can be seen as either consuming energy or controlling energy. The classical theories of play are grounded in philosophical convictions rather than empirical research and are therefore considered inadequate. The

following section of this literature review focuses on educators Friedrich Froebel and Maria Montessori. Both have had a profound influence on early childhood education.

Friedrich Froebel: 1782-1852. Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel (1782-1852) was an educational philosopher and teacher. Froebel was the son of a Lutheran minister, and he was raised in a traditionally religious household. He was a disciple of Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (Altenbaugh, 2003). Influenced by Pestalozzi, and other 18th century philosophers, Froebel believed that children were good by nature and that growth comes from within. Froebel also held fast to the notion that children learn through what they do themselves.

He called his vision and educational plan for young children, a kindergarten, a German word that expresses two ideas: the organizational model of the children's garden and the spiritual foundation "the garden of children" (Brosterman, 1997). Froebel felt that children needed to be tended to like plants in a garden. Prior to Froebel inventing the kindergarten, children under the age of seven did not attend school.

In 1837 he opened the first kindergarten in Germany. Froebel was among the first to develop systematic ways to utilize play within the early childhood educational process. His educational design of materials had a definite sequence and explicit directions for their use. He advocated that the kindergarten had a symbolic value. The garden was important in that the growing of plants paralleled the unfolding development of young children. Froebel's kindergarten taught conceptualization through symbols. Experiences in nature are a large part of Froebelian philosophy. Brosterman (1997) writes, "Unfortunately, kindergarten for us, and for most of the generations born in this century,

was a distortion, a diluted version of what originated as a radial and highly spiritual system of abstract-design activities intended to teach the recognition and appreciation of natural harmony” (p. 12). The harmony Brosterman describes was to cultivate in children the innate ability to observe, reason, express, and create.

Dewey (1916) recognizes Froebel’s contributions as perhaps the most effective single force in modern educational theory. Froebel believed that play provided opportunities for sensory experiences which he saw as the foundation for intellectual development. Froebel made object work central to his pedagogy; children needed to handle material things. By manipulating real objects, Froebel believed kindergartners developed problem solving skills and originality in thinking. As Weber (1969) expresses, “It was daringly new to suggest that a major portion of a child’s time in school be used to manipulate and construct objects” (p. 7).

Nature study and gardening were essential components in his program. The ideal garden had a small plot for each child and a common part with careful divisions for flowers and vegetables. Through garden work the child was expected to learn the importance of the development of plants as well as the relationship of the particular to the whole. Gardening was viewed as an avenue for a child to gain a first sense of responsibility as he or she tended to his or her plants. Care of pets and walks in the countryside added familiarity to the program. Seashells, seeds, pinecones, or quartz crystals might be used by kindergarten teachers to illustrate growth and unity in nature.

Dewey credits Froebel with recognizing the significance of the natural capabilities of children, providing them with loving attention, and influencing others to study them.

Froebel's early acknowledgement and observation of children set the stage for the acceptance of child psychology and the child study movement at the end of the 1900s (Brosterman, 1997).

Froebel believed that play was the avenue in which children learn, and his beliefs were transmitted into his curriculum. He wanted to help children acquire the spiritual meanings symbolized by materials and activities. He observed that there were unique stages of development in children and firmly believed that childhood was not merely preparation for adulthood but a significant stage to be both respected and cultivated (Weber, 1969). In many ways Froebel's kindergarten served as a substitute for the family by emphasizing the needs and interests of the child. Froebel's pedagogy was based on the following four tenets:

1. free self-expression
2. creativity
3. social participation
4. motor expression

Additional components in Froebel's model include cooperation, unity, and love; his was not a push-down curriculum focusing on academic tasks (Jeynes, 2006). Froebel stressed that an important outcome of school life was solid and positive social relationships and that they were founded on cooperation rather than competition (Weber, 1969).

Through play, Froebel believed children exhibit their simple and natural life. Froebel saw early childhood educators (women) as having the task of imparting two

major components of the core curriculum to young children: gifts and occupations. Gifts were discoveries and new insights to foster a child's knowledge of the world; they were solid objects such as blocks or yarn balls. The gifts were designed for the purpose of facilitating the natural play instincts of children (Oakes, 1975).

Occupations were designed to foster skills; they were materials that could be shaped or manipulated, such as clay, sand, beads, string and paper. Occupations also related to extending a child's social world from family to future work lives; play would imitate adulthood. Weber (1969) describes the value of Froebel's gifts and occupations as follows:

His belief in whole part relations and the inner connectedness of all life was demonstrated in the gifts and occupations, designing materials with a definite sequence and by supplying explicit directions for their use, he provided an educational system with clear directives for the teacher. The sequence held the program together as a whole. (p. 17)

The activities involving the gifts and occupations were highly prescriptive and explicit, giving children direction on how to utilize the materials. The activities were very teacher-directed and lacked what today we would call spontaneity and would not 'fit' into the current definition of play (Weber, 1969).

Brosterman (1997) describes a day in Froebel's kindergarten as follows:

A day (usually three hours) in kindergarten would typically begin with "good morning" music and a simple sing-along tied to the weather or season or other particular focus. After a group chat with the children seated in a large circle, the students would each find a place at communal worktables for their daily gift-play. Each child would have his or her own gift, and more than one type might be in use simultaneously if several teachers were present. Including distribution and collection, which was performed by the children themselves, the gift period would last thirty to forty minutes. The seated activities were followed by about forty-five minutes of active games and simple gymnastics. Occupation work for another

half-hour resulting in a take-home creation and a final ten-minute goodbye song ended the day. No two days in the kindergarten week were exactly the same. Gifts and occupations changed, music and games were varied, nature walks and gardening were included, and daily themes rotated unity in diversity was the basis of Froebel's system. (p. 39)

Maria Montessori: 1870-1952. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was another pioneer in early childhood education. As the first female physician in Italy, her work began with "defective children" in Rome (Wortham, 2003). She opened *Casa dei Bambini* on January 6, 1907, in a large tenement improvement project, to aid working mothers. She introduced her philosophies and program to the United States in 1915 at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco (Pollard, 1990, p. 47).

Activity is an essential component of her curriculum. She developed instructional materials that were both manipulative and sensorial for mentally disabled children. She too observed children and their play and reconstructed and systematized those observations into instructional methods with specific manipulative. She wanted to help children obtain a better understanding of the properties of objects and acquire specific skills by manipulating objects. She discouraged children's "free play" with the Montessori materials. Children were allowed to manipulate the Montessori materials but in prescribed ways; her materials are didactic in nature. These manipulative activities were considered "work," not "play." Montessori discouraged both fantasy and imaginative play. The Montessori child was allowed freedom to access the didactic materials, whereas the Froebelian kindergartner needed to follow the rigid order of gifts and occupations.

Weber (1969) outlines a daily schedule:

The daily schedule extended from eight or nine in the morning to four or five in the afternoon, depending on the season. It included large blocks of time for “practical life exercises,” sense training, gymnastics, games, manual work, and, of course, luncheon. The exercises for sense training and those for practical life formed the core of the program. (p. 76)

Montessori differed from Froebel as she believed that the child could learn elements of reading and writing long before primary education. She believed that by the constant repetition of sounds and drawing the components of letters a child paved the way for the word to burst through his or her consciousness (Shapiro, 1983).

Montessori stressed the importance of structure in the learning environment. The learning environments in her classrooms were highly organized with carefully sequenced, self-correcting materials. Dr. Montessori (1967) characterized children as having “absorbent minds” (1967) that use sensorial impressions from the environment to develop the senses. The vital principle Montessori encouraged was that children find answers to questions by themselves. As Pollard (1990) elaborates:

As children grow, Maria believed, more and more adults turn up to tell them what to do. Adults are all strong. Children are weak. Maria thought it was not surprising that so many children were shy or sullen or badly behaved. They needed to be able to decide for themselves what to do. They deserved to be able to make their own choices. Teachers, she came to insist, should “follow the child.” This was the thinking that lay behind the Montessori Method. It involved understanding the child’s point of view. It meant studying children and figuring out the reasons for what they did. In that way, Maria believed, it was the children who taught the teachers, not the other way around. (p. 48)

Both Froebel and Montessori created their curriculum activities based on the observation of children’s play; both saw the activities as a means to achieve learning. But in all actuality, the activities themselves are not considered play. Froebel’s purpose was to enable children to acquire spiritual meanings symbolized by his materials and

prescribed activities. Montessori's purpose was to enable children to understand the properties of specific objects and acquire specific skills by manipulating the objects. These two educators set the stage for a formalized view of early childhood education and laid the foundation for the formation of the kindergarten movement.

Early Kindergarten: 1856-1900. The earliest of kindergartens in the United States served the purpose of accelerating the acculturation of newly arrived immigrant children. Altenbaugh (2003) writes that "German immigrants introduced kindergarten to the United States, the American middle class adopted it and Americanized it, and educators imposed it on poor immigrant and working-class children to assimilate them" (p. 192).

In the years following, the purpose of kindergarten was seen as easing the child's transition from home to the formal aspects of schooling and to provide assimilation — via Americanization — teaching English, promoting American culture, and instilling patriotism.

In 1856, a student of Froebel named Margarethe Meyer Schurz, opened the first kindergarten in the United States in Watertown, Wisconsin (Altenbaugh, 2003). Her aims were as focused on cultural preservation as they were on intellectual development or educational preparation. As Shapiro (1983) writes, "Margarethe believed that without kindergarten, their German cultural heritage would be lost forever" (p. 30).

By the late 1800s Boston reformers like Elizabeth Peabody (a friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Herman Melville, and the sister-in-law of both Nathaniel Hawthorne and Horace Mann) popularized the concept of kindergarten. Peabody was teaching at an infant school in Concord when she first heard of the kindergarten movement. A year

later, she opened a kindergarten in Boston, the first English-speaking one of its kind in America and one that differed in kind from Schurz's innovation. The earliest kindergarten classrooms were play— oriented in naturalistic settings. Peabody (1860) believed that kindergartens should be private institutions, separate from the public school system so as, to avoid the “artificialness of traditional schoolwork” (Altenbaugh, 2003, p. 193). Peabody further advanced the concept of kindergarten through her monthly magazine, *The Kindergarten Messenger* (Vandewalker, 1917).

Shapiro (1983) reports that in this Victorian era, the American public still drew a sharp distinction between play and work and was deeply suspicious of the educational value of play. It might be argued, given substantial evidence, that such suspicion is still prominent across the nation nearly 150 years later.

One interested citizen in the kindergarten movement was the famous game manufacturer Milton Bradley. In 1869 a lecture given by Elizabeth Peabody and was struck by her convictions that a child becomes educated through his or her own creative activities which are developed at an early age. Bradley's company was at the height of commercial success when he developed his interest and promotion of the Froebel kindergarten movement. As early as 1871, Bradley began to manufacture the kindergarten gifts as described by Froebel and also started publishing Froebelian literature.

At the 1876 celebration of the United States centennial, Bradley displayed his materials to a wide audience. He promoted them not just as entertaining but also as educational (Shapiro, 1983). The kindergarten movement was not only a cause, but now

became a business; educational supplies were seen as profitable in the children's market. Bradley would spend much of the rest of his life promoting the kindergarten movement both personally and through the Milton Bradley Company.

It is clear that the kindergarten movement was, at least in its fledgling years, kept alive and nourished by women reformers. Through their philosophical and often philanthropic support, women helped to push the movement forward in lasting ways. By 1885 there were 565 kindergartens in America, 1,400 teachers, and 29,716 students (Brosterman, 1997). Denver's first kindergarten is reported to have begun in 1876, followed by the Denver Kindergarten Association in 1889; within a decade, the first public school kindergarten opened in the city (Vandewalker, 1917).

One critical and prominent kindergarten reformer was Susan Blow. An early enthusiast of Froebel, she furthered the "Americanization of the kindergarten" (Altenbaugh, 2003) and established with Superintendent William T. Harris of St. Louis the first public school kindergarten on an experimental basis in 1873 (Cuban, 1992). By the end of that decade, the general public of St. Louis "had endorsed the novel approach to schooling. The spread of the urban kindergarten occurred in a clear trend line, save for a slight drop during the Great Depression of the 1930s when cuts in kindergarten and a drop in the birthrate combined to halt their growth for a few years" (Cuban, p. 176).

Patty Howard Hill (1877), one of G. Stanley Hall's students, also made contributions to "modernize" Froebel's initial conceptions of kindergarten. As deCos

(2001) notes, Hill made several important innovations in the daily routines of kindergarten play:

She substituted selected arts and crafts, used building blocks and dramatic play areas, and included American songs and games in her curriculum. This progressive kindergarten was child-focused, and its activities helped children build their reasoning capacity to higher levels. Hill also advocated the combination of kindergarten and first grade in order to *lessen* the academic emphasis of first grade, *not* to increase the academic focus of kindergarten. (p. 26)

Hill began the movement to use free play in her kindergarten classroom. Sluss (2004) credits Hill's movement as the "precursor for developmentally appropriate practice" (p. 49).

At the turn of the century, the conception of kindergarten and high school as integral parts of a universal educational system in the United States was accepted. Yet the kindergarten movement was divided with the more experimental, less teacher-centered approaches to the curriculum on one side and the teacher-centered and scientific approaches to the curriculum on the other. Brosterman (1997) writes:

Kindergarten had started as a movement, exploded into a fad, and, by the 1890s, was on the verge of becoming yet another of society's many ponderous institutions. By the time popularity made it an essential part of education and daily life, it resembled Froebel's model in outward appearance only. It was in America that this declension of an ideal was most firmly recognized by the educational establishment. (p.101)

The early 1900s also saw the emergence of the scientific study of children, a development known as The Child Study Movement. The movement stressed the uniqueness of the child as opposed to the formerly prevailing concept of the child as a miniature adult (Oakes, 1975). This movement was to bring a new perspective on how children, particularly young children, should be educated.

As the number of kindergarten classrooms increased and enrollment grew across the nation, kindergarten philosophies and theories evolved. Greater emphasis was placed on developing cognitive skills in the kindergarten curriculum rather than on Froebel's idealism and emphasis on play. By 1908 there were more than 400 different kindergarten associations in America (Brosterman, 1997).

An interesting pilot kindergarten program was implemented by John D. Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel and Iron Company in Pueblo, Colorado, in 1892. The company held more than forty properties consisting of coal, manganese, iron, and coke camps, in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and New Mexico. The company employed approximately fifteen thousand men, who spoke among them no fewer than twenty-seven different languages. There were thirteen kindergartens located throughout the camps. The work of the kindergartner (the word once reserved as description of the teacher) had features of welfare labor and maintained the goal of social betterment for all employees in the camps. As many of the children came to kindergarten with a language other than English as their first language, pedagogical emphasis was placed on non-language instruction: singing, imitation, nature study, game playing, drawing, water color, free-hand cutting, and constructive work. Vandewalker (1917) reports, "The work done by this company is an object-lesson to the whole country of what may be done in an industrial community in the direction of educational and social betterment, by wisely directed humanitarian effort" (p. 64).

The Child Study Movement grew out of the scientific work of Darwin (1859) and G. Stanley Hall (1906) and had little use for the untested and untestable metaphysics of

Froebel (Brosterman, 1997). Arnold Gesell (1911) of Yale and Edward Thorndike (1910) of Teachers College advocated a child-development perspective. Thorndike was influenced by the work of Binet and Simon on the measurement of intelligence. He defined three basic laws of learning: readiness, exercise, and effect through stimulus and response connections.

Gesell made his contributions to child study through the Yale Clinic of Child Development. His observational research focused on the maturation of the child, based on the concept of inherent or genetic predetermination. Gesell is credited for establishing norms of growth and development and the principle of developmental readiness for learning. The child study movement brought on changes to the kindergarten program in America. The advocates of this movement strived to educate the public, particularly parents and teachers, with the fundamental facts and insights of child development by personal observations.

The educational pendulum has a way of swinging back and forth. One cannot help but wonder if turn of the century controversies and curricular battles over “scientific” versus “progressive,” or “empirical” versus “pragmatic” curricula reappeared within current debate centering on the merits of “No Child Left Behind.”

Be that as it may, the work of theorists such as Thorndike, Gesell, and Hall prompted the highly influential responses of the Progressive Era theorists, none more compelling or important than those of John Dewey (1859-1952). It was the influence of the developmental perspective upon learning, so closely identified with Dewey’s

contributions, which marked the next phase of pedagogical theory. As Cuban (1992)

writes:

Focused on the natural unfolding of each child's abilities at the appropriate time, the developmental perspective attended to children's emotional growth, social and interpersonal skills, creative expression, sensory awareness, oral language skills, and intellectual ripening. Harnessed to John Dewey's ideas of social learning, the developmental perspective incorporated group learning and cooperation as essential to a democratic society. (p. 181)

The Progressive Era: 1900-1920. The Progressive Era (1900-1920) viewed play very differently from either Froebel's or Montessori's philosophies. Theorists saw play as a vehicle for learning and development in early childhood education, with John Dewey as the chief advocate of this shift in thinking. As progressives became increasingly convinced that curriculum changes were necessary in kindergarten classrooms, the conservatives argued more adamantly that Froebel's philosophy and program ought to remain intact. As Sluss (2004) points out, "For Dewey, the value of play was the child's ability to learn through freely chosen play in a democratic classroom. This led him to reverse active learning" (p. 50).

The progressive education movement was a humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life to all students (Wortham, 2002). It was the Progressive Era that clearly differentiated between play and work for children. Children's play resulted from the child's free and natural motivation. Play was action oriented and performed for its own sake. Work on the other hand was done because it was a requirement or for external reward.

Dewey believed young children needed an education that integrated their daily experiences in the community. He believed that education was embedded in the social life of the community. Dewey saw all education as social (Altenbaugh, 2003). He also supported the notion that children made these experiences educational by reconstructing their experiences. Dewey believed that children learn about themselves and their world through the avenue of play. As a consequence of such beliefs, Dewey encouraged teachers to provide an atmosphere that would support the children's moral and mental growth through the venue of play. He saw the teacher's role as guiding children toward an understanding of knowledge. He promoted the benefits of experiential, student-directed learning opportunities. Dewey's ideas provided the foundation for the theory of constructivism. This theory places emphasis on the importance of allowing individuals to construct knowledge through their interactions with the environment.

As Dewey (1916) wrote, "Experience has shown that when children have a chance at physical activities which bring their natural impulses into play, going to school is a joy, management is less of a burden and learning is easier" (p. 194). Dewey argued that play ought to be at the forefront of early childhood education. "The first approach to any subject in school," he wrote, "if thought is to be aroused and not words acquired, should be as unscholastic as possible" (Dewey, 1916, p. 154).

During the Progressive Era, early childhood classrooms, namely kindergarten classrooms, had corners devoted to dramatic play areas with miniature representation of real objects (e.g., kitchen sets, supermarkets, and doctors' offices). These objects help children dramatize their home life and social lives. The curriculum was integrated, and it

emphasized a cooperative environment. The teacher observed the play and tried to figure out how to sustain or elaborate play to enhance language development, cooperation, perspective-taking, and sharing. These views are still current today in *some* kindergarten classrooms.

As Cuban (1992) states:

The intended and taught curricula of the kindergarten reveal strong differences between the dominant beliefs of kindergarten and upper elementary and secondary teachers. These beliefs were the basis of what have come to be called developmental perspective: how children are viewed (they are more than a mind; they are individuals who have feelings, interests, and concerns that need attention beyond academic skills); how learning occurred (learning through individual play, through working in groups); how knowledge is constructed (wisdom is not told, it is constructed by each person; understanding of ideas and things is more important than the accumulation of facts); and how teaching should occur (the teacher's role is guide and helper not source of all intellectual and formal authority; a teacher's role is to help children learn how to learn as individuals and within groups.). (p. 190)

By the eve of World War II, kindergarten had become such a fixture in the elementary school setting that the standard designation of an elementary school was no longer grades 1-6 but K-6. But a shift in thinking occurred in the delivery of the curriculum during this era. Emphasis moved away from the naturalistic setting to a more focused approach on schooling within an institutional environment. According to Cuban (1992):

The content of the kindergarten's intended curriculum shifted decidedly in the decades after its introduction to urban schools. A struggle emerged between those (e.g., Susan Blow) who adhered to the Froebelian principles of the child's nature, the heavy symbolism in the methods and materials of gifts and occupations (art, music, and handicrafts), and those (e.g., Patty Howard Hill) who wished to adapt these principles to the American setting and the emerging research on how children developed. The struggle pitted those (soon to be labeled "conservatives") trained in the fixed sequence of materials presented to students, the teacher's

scripted responses, and a Froebelian orthodoxy against those (labeled “liberals” or “progressives”) who saw much merit to Froebelian materials and processes but, deeply influenced by the work of psychologists G. Stanley Hall and later Edward Thorndike, sought more pragmatic, scientific approaches to teaching five-year-olds. (p. 180)

These events and individuals provide an understanding for the modern theories on play. Again, as we have noted, conceiving of play as a garden is helpful in terms of grappling with its myriad expressions. As Shapiro (1983) asks in *Child's Garden*,

The nature and origin of play remained one of the most troublesome issues, and Dewey's influence was implicit in most questions before the IKU (International Kindergarten Union). Was play innate, instinctual, vestigial, or social? Were the child's free hours to be limited, controlled, directed, or uncontrolled? The proper relation of work and play in the kindergarten also troubled some kindergartners. Should work and play be symbolic or abstract, real or concrete? Should early education introduce the child to a world of thought or a world of industry? (p. 175)

The contribution of the modern theories and theorists on play add even more texture and depth to the confluence of new ideas surrounding play in the lives of children. These theories and theorists provide a lens for our current understanding of play.

Modern Theories and Theorists on Play

There are many attempts to classify the modern theories and theorists on play. Modern theories on play differ from classical theories because they are supported with empirical research. Modern theorists view play as a means to cultivate cognition or the use of symbols. These theories focused on how play enhances development in young children.

Elkind (2007) describes four major types of play young children experience: mastery play, innovative play, kinship play, and therapeutic play. Mastery play makes it

possible for children to construct concepts and skills. Innovative play occurs when the child has mastered concepts and skills, and introduces variations. Kinship play initiates the child into the world of peer relations. Therapeutic play gives children strategies for dealing with stressful life events. Elkind recognizes that these divisions of play types are artificial and the categories are introduced to serve as discussion points. He is careful to point out the fact that infants and young children do not divide up their learning into such categories, but that their intellectual, social and emotional learning occurs at the same time. Elkind's ideas, simply synthesized, are based on modern play theories. The threads of Elkind's four major types of play can be found woven into the modern theories on play. The following table outlines three modern theories on play, three modern theorists on play, and dates when the theory became known.

Table 2.2.
Modern Theories and Theorists on Play

Theory	Proponent	Date
Psychoanalytic theory of play	Freud, Erikson	1900s
Sociocultural theory of play	Vygotsky	1920s
Cognitive development theory of play	Piaget	1952

Psychoanalytic Theory of Play. The psychoanalytic view of play was developed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and extended by Erik Erikson and other Freudian followers. This theory is interested in helping children whose problems stem from difficulty in managing feelings. Freud saw the child as motivated to seek pleasure and avoid pain. He also believed that play was cathartic, in that children at play control

situations that are normally out of their control. His premise was that children play to disengage themselves of the negative emotions or feelings brought on by traumatic events; and that play allows them to develop a more equal emotional equilibrium. Play enables children to communicate their feelings. The content of play has strong affective tones. From this perspective, play benefits both social and emotional development.

Freud, an Austrian physician and neurologist, did not develop a specific theory on play, but his writings reflect his views on the importance of play in children's emotional development.

Erik Erikson (1902-1994) studied with Freud and shared a similar psychoanalytical view on play. Sluss (2004) contends that the two “differed in the area of Erikson's explanation of unconscious motivation in terms of psychosocial— not psychosexual — forces” (p. 53). Erikson focused on stages of personality development throughout one's life cycle. The first three stages focus on the infant and young child developing a sense of trust, autonomy and initiative. Wortham (2002) argues, “As the child matures through the stages, favorable or unfavorable results occur, depending on whether or not the child was successful in resolving the crisis of development results in desirable qualities; conversely, negative resolution of a stage can have long-lasting personality effects later in life” (p. 49).

Erikson viewed play as an expressive behavior that led to both emotional and social development through mastery of psychosocial crises. According to Erikson, children play to enact the past, the present, and the future, and these play experiences

help children settle conflicts they will encounter at all developmental stages. Erikson (1985) recognized three major purposes of play:

1. play as ego mastery for emotional development,
2. play as social,
3. play as a life-long experience.

Erikson viewed play as a way to reduce anxiety by giving the child control over the issue at hand and providing an acceptable venue for release. Erikson's view on play is used primarily by play therapists, but his work has influenced current play scholarship.

Sociocultural Theory of Play. This theory considers social, cultural, and historical factors that may influence cognitive development during social interactions. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), Piaget's Russian contemporary, was interested in how children learn and how learning contributes to development. One contribution he made to the field was his articulation and demonstration on how a child's development rests on their engagement with their culture.

Vygotsky saw play as a way to construct knowledge during social interactions with the world and as a source of cognitive development. He believed that parents and teachers can assist children's learning by working within their *zone of proximal development*. In the zone of proximal development, children exhibit higher levels of competence than when outside the zone.

Vygotsky saw play as having two major purposes. One has to do with the role of pretend or fantasy. He believed that the child creates his or her own reality through fantasy or pretend play. An example would be that the child wants to drive a car but is

kept from doing so. Therefore, he or she pretends to drive a car. This behavior is important to note as it prompts the child to engage in abstract thought. When the child pretends a branch is a horse, he engages in abstract thought. Vygotsky believed that through symbolic play children come to organize meaning in language and thought.

The second purpose Vygotsky found in play was that it originates from the first purpose and involves rules. Children will engage in play with specific behaviors they think are important to the role they are working through. Often the child will not allow anyone else into this world of pretend unless he or she fits the role. The adult needs to enter the world of play to support or scaffold what the child is attempting to understand. Vygotsky contributed to the field of play studies his demonstration of how children's development rests on their active participation in their culture.

Cognitive Development Theory of Play. The cognitive development theory has a place in today's kindergarten classroom and through free play for children. Proponents of this viewpoint believe play is the dominant and directing mode of learning; children learn best through self-created learning experiences. This theory considers play as an avenue for intellectual growth and development. Swiss philosopher and developmental psychologist, Jean Piaget (1952) looked deeply at the dual processes of assimilation and accommodation to explain cognitive development. In *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* (1951), he describes detailed daily observations he made on the behaviors of his own three children. He refers to assimilation as thinking or using objects or ideas in ways we already know. Conversely, accommodation involves changing our way of thinking based on new information. Children are constantly creating a dynamic balance

between these two processes. Young children practice new behaviors through play. The practicing provides repetition which then adds the newly acquired skill into the child's growing repertoire of proficiencies and understandings.

Piaget saw play as a way to construct knowledge and as a reflection of intelligence. He viewed play has having a crucial role in developing representational language and thought. Piaget describes fixed, sequenced stages of intellectual development that mirror his stages of play development. Each stage forms a hierarchy: each one is different from the one before, but each one incorporates the previous stage.

The stages are as follows:

- sensorimotor or practice play,
- symbolic or pretend play,
- games with rules.

Howard (1986) elaborates on Piaget's stages:

Sensorimotor or practice play refers to the sort of exploratory learning or practice behaviours that are especially seen in the young infant, though they continue beyond pretend or symbolic play, most common from 2 to 6 years, is the prototypical example of children's play...games with rules, characteristics of 6 or 7 years onwards, have some agreed structure which a participant is normally constrained to follow. (p. 5)

According to Piaget, there are four interrelated factors which together help a child move from one stage to the next (Peterson & Felton-Collins, 1986):

- maturation (physical and physiological growth, including muscular and nervous systems),

- experience (sensori-motor input from acting on and thinking about real or concrete objects),
- social interaction (socializing, playing, talking, questionings, and working with others, especially other children),
- equilibration (the process of bringing maturation, experience, and interaction together to build mental structures or systems for considering the world). (p. 4)

Piaget valued free play in the consolidation of skills, and also as a means for a child to develop confidence in his or her own activities. Piaget advocated that learning is an active process, that it is advanced through action and “doing.”

Contrary to Vygotsky, who believed that play led development, Piaget believed development led play. Both have had a major impact on how play is viewed and understood in early childhood education.

The history of early childhood education and the formation of kindergarten in America lead to the contemporary theories and theorists on play. The next section of this literature review focuses on the contemporary theories of play. These theories look at play in relation to how children make sense of their world and how they come to understand the nature of understanding (meta-cognition).

Contemporary Theories and Theorists on Play

Play occurs in a multitude of interwoven contexts: home, school, and neighborhood. Children communicate and learn from others including understanding differing points of view. These contexts affect whether and how often children play. The

following pages categorize and highlight five contemporary theories and theorists on play. The following table outlines five contemporary theories on play, five contemporary theorists on play, and dates when the theory became known.

Table 2.3.
Contemporary Theories and Theorists on Play

Theory	Proponent	Dates
Cultural–Ecological Theory	Pellegrini	late 1900s
Arousal Modulation Theory	Berlyne	1969
Communication Theory	Bateson, Garvey	late 1900s
Cognitive Adaptation Theory	Bruner	1970s
Theory of Mind	Leslie	late 1900s

Cultural-Ecological Theory of Play. The theories that explain play in terms of contexts are referred to as cultural-ecological theories. Pellegrini and Smith’s (1993) research on school recess is an example of this type of modern theory on play. As Scarlett, Naudeau, Salonijs-Pasternak, and Ponte (2005) point out so expressively:

In the dominant North American culture, most assume that play is good, even essential, for children. Most assume that adults should be actively involved supporting and at times coaching children’s play. And most assume that children’s age-mates are children’s natural play partners. These assumptions turn out to be cultural assumptions, not universals. (p. 13)

Arousal Modulation Theory. Berlyne (1969) was the first to propose this theory on play. This outlook on play is based on behavior learning theory and the work of Spenser’s (1873) thoughts on surplus energy theory. The Arousal Modulation Theory observes play as a behavior that occurs as a result of biological adaptation. Sluss (2004)

states, “Berlyne believed that the central nervous system tried to remain in a certain state of arousal. If there is too little stimulation, the child will engage in stimulus-seeking behavior or play. If too much stimulation is present, play will cease” (p. 58). This view may explain why children roam from one activity to the next on the playground. Often children spend time in one activity and then switch to another. Switching the activity might allow the child to gain new ideas and insights, attempt risky behaviors, or retreat from too much stimulation. According to Berlyne, play happens as a result of biological adaptation.

Communication Theory. This theory views play as necessary for communication purposes. The communication that happens during play is unique to the play setting. Gregory Bateson (1955) and Catherine Garvey (1977) have contributed to this field of play scholarship. Bateson developed this theory based on his own anthropological study of otters at play. Bateson was interested in questions of adaptation and misadaptation (mental illness). Accordingly to Sluss (2004):

He (Bateson) believed that children create a context for play when they exchange metacommunicative signals or text that convey the message that play is occurring. Everyone involved in the play must understand the message. When children say, “This is play,” they signal to others that play is occurring— that what we are doing is not real— but is pretend and fun. This communication signals the other child when play begins and when play ends. (p.59)

Bateson called this shift from realism to make-believe a *play frame*. The frame is that which we signal; when we indicate to others that we want to move from realism to make believe. This frame play requires that the players take on various roles. In order for players to be in the same play frame, the players must agree to be in the same imaginary

world, and they must know what to do once they get there. Play allows children to develop flexibility so they can move in and out of the many roles they will eventually take in life (reminiscent of Montessori's beliefs and the classical theory of practice or pre-exercise theory of play).

Psychologist Catherine Garvey (1977) built on Bateson's play frames and studied the language used by children as they transitioned in and out of pretend play frames. She wanted to understand the complexity involved in the child's language during play. She noticed that much of the child's communication involved creating, clarifying, maintaining, and negotiating pretend play.

Cognitive Adaptation Theory. Building on the research of Piaget, recent studies in play scholarship have focused on play as necessary for cognitive adaptation. The resulting theory differs from Piagetian theory in that the focus is on the child's construction of knowledge through symbols. Jerome Bruner (1972) viewed play as a medium for cognitive adaptation.

Sluss (2004) writes:

Social and cooperative play provide a venue for developing problem-solving skills and encouraging creativity. Bruner was especially interested in play as a way immature or novice learners could safely explore their world as they prepare to assume adult roles. Bruner's early work tends to support the early practice theory of play. More recently, Bruner (1990) has focused on the role of narrative for development. He views children as "meaning makers" who are trying to understand their world. (p. 60)

Play, according to Bruner, allowed for development in problem solving, cooperation and competition, sex roles, cultural acquisition, language, and creativity. Play is also an

avenue for the use of objects as problem-solving tools, and play is the setting where social meanings are constructed.

Theory of Mind. Leslie (1987) was the first to link play and theory of mind (Sluss, 2004). The concept behind theory of mind describes the condition in which a child understands that he has an internal mental state and that others also have internal structures. This occurs when the child realizes that his view is different from the view of others. This theory may help understand how children develop empathy through play and may also provide insights on how children view the world both in— and outside the realm of play.

In summary, contemporary theories on play provide varying cognitive views on the subject. Play is understood to be a social, healing, creative means to process information and consolidate knowledge. Play provides new tools for thinking. Play is an important context for developing social skills. Play is how children make sense of their world. Play is seen as the reflection of the lives children lead within their own culture. Play is used by children to construct and reconstruct their understandings of the world.

Contemporary Kindergarten Classrooms

In regard to the contemporary classrooms, Elkind (2007) notes that developmental rates have not accelerated, nor are children more intelligent than they used to be. Their school structure must remain closely related to their needs and not insist upon a push-down curriculum, with the intention of increasing test scores. Today's kindergarten teachers are faced with the dilemma of providing "best practice" or a classroom that

follows developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and following district, state, and federal mandates that align with increasingly rote academic standards.

Shepard and Smith (1988) discuss the disadvantages to this pedagogical momentum:

Policies such as raising the entrance age, readiness screening, and kindergarten retention are intended to solve the problem of inappropriate academic demand by removing younger or unready children. Research evidence does not support the efficacy of these policies. Rather, these practices contribute to the continued escalation of curriculum as teachers adjust their teaching to an older and more able group. (p. 134)

Developmentally Appropriate Practices. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the nation's largest professional association of early childhood educators, believes that high quality, developmentally appropriate programs should be available for all children. The organization has worked to establish standards and has developed a position paper (1986) based on research (Piaget, Montessori, Vygotsky, Elkind, Kamii, and Erikson) that specifically addresses the importance of best practice, including constructivist teaching and play curriculum in kindergarten. (*Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age Eight*, Sue Bredekamp, editor). The first edition of this book, *Developmentally Appropriate Care for Children from Birth to Age Three*, published in November of 1986, sold 25,000 copies in ten months' time. It became clear to the committee that a wider version of the position paper was needed to include children from age four through age eight, based on the concern that kindergarten and even preschool programs were becoming watered-down first grades with too much

emphasis on teacher-directed instruction in narrowly defined academic skills. The expanded version was created in 1987; the chairperson of this body of work was Bernard Spodek, who has contributed significantly to play scholarship. Bredekamp (1987) writes, “Development is a truly fascinating and wonderful phenomenon. It is not something to be accelerated or skipped. One period of childhood or aspect of development is not better or more important than another; each has its own tasks to accomplish” (p. iv).

Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) include what is known about child development and learning, what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group, and knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live (Bredekamp, 1987). DAP are evolving concepts as educators and researchers learn more about how young children grow, develop, and learn with respect to their whole being: socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and academically.

The position paper states that young children learn by doing and that learning is a complex process that results from the interaction of children’s own thinking and their experiences and exploration in the world. Bredekamp (1987) elaborates:

Maturation is an important contributor to learning because it provides a framework from which children’s learning proceeds. As children get older, they acquire new skills and experiences that facilitate the learning process. For example, as children grow physically, they are more able to manipulate and explore their own environment. Also, as children mature, they are more able to understand the point of view of other people. Teachers of young children need to prepare learning environments that stimulate and challenge their students and provide materials and activities to enhance learning. Teachers then need to be keen observers of these situations and observe what children understand and pose additional questions and challenges to nudge their thinking further. (p. 51)

Child-initiated, child-directed, teacher-supported play is an essential component of developmentally appropriate practice. Yet, as Goldstein (2007) reports:

Shifts (K-12 standards-based accountability systems implemented in response to the No Child Left Behind Act) in conceptions and purpose have changed the expectations for kindergarten curriculum and pedagogy in significant ways. Standards delineate clearly the specific knowledge and skills that students must master; as a result, kindergarten teachers' abilities to base their decisions about what to teach on their students' prior knowledge, interests, and needs has been drastically limited. (p. 378)

The efforts of NAEYC to describe developmentally appropriate practices are admirable. Are they, however, implemented within the changing landscape of kindergarten curriculums and classroom practice?

In their article entitled "Escalating Academic Demands in Kindergarten: Counterproductive Policies," Shepard and Smith (1988) reported that in,

addition to large-scale social trends, the transformation of the early grades curriculum is acted out at a personal level. In our interviews with 40 kindergarten teachers in a middle-class school district (Shepard & Howard, 1985), teachers made recurring referenced to day-to-day pressures to raise expectations. A substantial group of teachers had established kindergarten goals in excess of district guidelines because first-grade teachers required such outcomes. (p. 136)

If these were the results in 1985, what must the pressures be like twenty-four years later in the era of accountability enhanced by No Child Left Behind? Goldstein (2007) argues that

President George W. Bush's renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Act, otherwise known as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) has caused public schools to emphasize the mastery of academic skills, the achievement of predetermined learning outcomes, and the need for accountability. Originally confined to the upper grades, the curricular and instructional requirements associated with these new policies have begun to affect kindergarten. Today, in addition to providing learning experiences that support the development of the

whole child, kindergarten teachers must also ensure that their students have had opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills mandated by their state. (p. 40)

Each perspective analyzed thus far throughout this literature review challenged the perspective before it. Classical, modern, and contemporary theories on play; the insights of Froebel, Montessori, Dewey; the history of the kindergarten movement; Developmentally Appropriate Practices; and recent legislation (No Child Left Behind) have affected early childhood education and children's play. What becomes clear is that each contributor added new insights, varying interpretations, and disagreements into the field of child development and children's play. Theory helps us think about what we experience. It is a tool for understanding, and it can serve as a lens for viewing the world and making sense of it. The various theories discussed on children's play provide assorted views, each shaped by the many disciplines that have added to our knowledge base on play. Yet the question remains: are these theoretical additions to knowledge occurring at the ultimate expense of the (de)composition of a garden for children's play?

Best Practice v. Mandated Law: What Do Teachers Do? Part of the research completed for this dissertation engaged kindergarten teachers and sought their impressions of play in their classrooms. My hope was that this research study would be comprised of a wide range of teachers, from novice to experienced, willing to share their thoughts on the value of play, the structure of their day, and the current kindergarten curriculum taught. What do teachers think is going on in play? How do they make sense of what they see? Do these teachers have a knowledge base about play? If so, are they

able to implement play into the school day, or is the day too busy with tasks deemed to be academic?

Lisa Goldstein conducted a qualitative study in Texas in 2006 with two kindergarten teachers. Her article, “Beyond the DAP (Developmentally Appropriate Practice) versus Standards Dilemma: Examining the Unforgiving Complexity of Kindergarten Teaching in the United States,” appeared in *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* in 2007. Goldstein’s findings suggest that the dilemma is far more complex and complicated than just DAP v. Standards. The two teachers studied reported an “intensified climate in today’s kindergarten” (Goldstein, 2007). The contributing factors found include:

- new district policies and demands,
- increasingly higher parental expectations,
- greater than before demands from colleagues (especially first grade teachers).

Is this conclusion valid in all kindergartens across the nation? Goldstein’s findings suggest looking beyond current framing of the debate to place emphasis on the examination of the *full* range of complexities and opportunities facing kindergarten teachers. By doing so, practitioners may experience and respond to the new demands and changing expectations with deeper understanding.

How do kindergarteners themselves view the value of play in their school day?

According to King (1979):

Educators continue to define play, to describe its place in child development, and to assign it a role in education. Such educational research is written from an adult perspective; kindergarten children themselves have not been asked to define play

in the school setting. Because adult perspectives on reality do not always accord with those of children, defining play in kindergarten from the children's point of view would add a new dimension to our understanding of the role of play in the life of the child and in the classroom setting. (p. 82)

Summary

This literature review articulates the philosophical rationale for play, drawing on various perspectives and theories — psychoanalytic, cognitive, and sociocultural — to support the long-range benefits of play in kindergarten classrooms. It also reviews the nearly 150— year history of the kindergarten movement in the United States.

As expressed in this review of the literature, all theorists, regardless of their orientation, concur that play occupies a central role in children's lives. Isenberg and Quisenberry (2002) write:

Psychoanalysts believe play is necessary for mastering emotional traumas or disturbances; *psychosocialists* believe it is necessary for ego mastery experiences; *constructivists* believe it is necessary for cognitive growth; *maturationalists* believe it is necessary for competence building and for socializing functions in all cultures of the world; and *neuroscientists* believe it is necessary for emotional and physical health, motivation, and love of learning.

As stated in a position paper for the Association for Childhood Education International, entitled "The Child-Centered Kindergarten," by Joan Moyer (2001): "Early childhood professionals at all levels are concerned about the methods and content in the majority of kindergarten programs. Despite societal changes, kindergarten remains a place where children need a quality program in order to achieve their full potential" (p. 162).

Pellegrini (2001) elaborates further:

Consequently, play and assessments, despite their co-occurrence in today's schools, make very strange bedfellows. At one level they seem very incompatible. Play is conceptualized as a child-defined activity where the "means" of an activity are more important than the "ends" of the activity. By definition, play is an activity with no direct purpose. Assessment contexts, on the other hand, are typically defined by adults, rather than children, and are concerned with end products of an activity, whether they be children's projects or their ability to cooperate with peers. Can these two seemingly opposite constructs be reconciled? (p. 861)

This research study tries to answer that dilemma through four research questions aimed to help educational leaders within a single school district think about their full-day kindergarten program. In the next chapter, the research design and methodology is described in gathering data from three kindergarten classrooms, kindergarten teachers, principals, and superintendent and curriculum director in one school district.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Play is the highest form of research.

Albert Einstein

Introduction

The method used in this study was Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism. This methodology was largely developed by Elliot Eisner at Stanford in 1976. Key components of the research included close observation of the educational settings, the collection of pertinent artifacts regarding these settings, and both formal and informal interviews of the various constituencies within given settings. Through this methodology I have attempted to understand the complexities and nuances of the current state of play in kindergarten classrooms. I approached the research and observations with a query: can teachers create a “base of play” amidst recently imposed standards and test-taking regimes?

This methodology required that I take on two roles, the role of connoisseur and then the role of critic. Eisner (1998) states that before one can be an effective educational critic, he or she needs first to be a connoisseur of education.

Educational Connoisseurship

Connoisseurship is a private and often quiet act in which we all engage from time to time. A connoisseur’s aim is to understand what is going on for the purpose of

privately appreciating it (Eisner, 1998). Eisner has provided us with five dimensions to help the educational connoisseur, namely intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative. By immersing myself within a school district and three kindergarten classrooms, each with varying school communities and cultures, I have lived within the five dimensions of schooling as outlined by Eisner. These dimensions allowed me, as a connoisseur, to understand the current state of play in the kindergarten classrooms I studied.

The Five Dimensions. The intentional dimension states the goals or aims that each classroom, playground, and school value. As a connoisseur, the researcher also examined each school's mission statement, newsletters, and parent handbooks to see what was explicitly communicated regarding play and the purpose(s) of kindergarten. Was there a match or disconnect between what was explicitly communicated and possibly advocated, and what actually occurred?

The structural dimension relates to how each specific school is organized. In this dimension I focused on how each school addresses time, space, objects, and events. Was there a specific playtime for kindergartners? Who supervises this time, and how does play get facilitated? I examined the birthday cut-off dates for each school and the actual range of birthdays within each kindergarten class to ascertain if parents or administrators in this school district were delaying entrance.

The curricular dimension focuses on the quality of the curriculum's content and goals and the activities used to engage students in play. Was there room for a dramatic play area? What activities were students engaged in? How was it determined who would

play there and for how long? Was the play area used to maximize the current curricular areas of study?

The fourth major area concerns the pedagogical dimension. This involves looking closely at the teaching styles employed by teachers to present curriculum. Are teachers delivering curriculum in a manner that supports play (constructivist approach) or that supports a more academic model? Does a teacher's instructional style reveal what is valued? What does the play intend to do? Does the play transfer from one curricular area to another? Is it valued by the teacher?

The final dimension of schooling through the connoisseur's lens is evaluative. As a connoisseur, I paid close attention to the types of tools the schools used to evaluate student performance. What types of evidence did a teacher use to inform his or her knowledge of student growth? Is evidence gathered only through paper/pencil tasks, or can a teacher be informed of growth through observation of play? If a teacher gains knowledge about watching a child through play, how does that teacher use the information to inform further instruction?

Educational Criticism

As a researcher, I have attempted not only to study intact kindergarten settings in their 'natural state,' but have tried to make sense of those settings through Educational Criticism: using language to make public what I have seen, heard, interpreted, gathered, and considered. Whereas Educational Connoisseurship is the private art of appreciation; Educational Criticism is the art of disclosure (Eisner, 1998). Educational Criticism provides connoisseurship with a public face; it illuminates what has happened within the

given setting. This methodology enabled me as the researcher to position my participants' experiences, perceptions, and decisions in relation to both the specific demands presented by their school and district requirements as well as to the state and national legislation that shaped those requirements. Eisner (1998) has conceptualized four elements within the realm of Educational Criticism. He describes these elements as “a midwife to perception” with the aim of helping others see and understand.

The Four Elements. Four elements provide structure to Educational Criticism, not in isolation but rather interacting and overlapping with one another to provide the reader with a rich understanding. The first element is description. I have attempted to paint a vivid and authentic picture of what occurred within each of the kindergarten classrooms and on the playgrounds to enable the reader to appreciate vicariously and visualize what I have described.

The next element of Educational Criticism is interpretation. Here I try to give context, perspective, and significance to what has been described. Careful attention to details and examining classroom activities, drawn interpretations of play by individual kindergarten students, and interviews with the various constituencies of the school district (teachers, principals, the superintendent, the curriculum director) allowed for interpretation.

The third element of Educational Criticism is evaluation. It is here that the critic appraises what has been seen according to certain criteria. As Eisner clarifies, when there is evaluation, value judgments are made. “Because schools are social institutions whose

mission is educational, the significance of what transpires in school is subject to criteria that allow its educational value to be appraised” (1998, p. 98).

Thematics is the fourth and final element of Educational Criticism. Do themes or patterns emerge from the three classrooms studied? What further insights, even in speculative terms, can be gleaned from the research? As Eisner (1998) writes, “It would seem that a critic does all that can be done when description, interpretation, and evaluation have been completed. But there is more” (p. 103). Is there an emerging theme or pattern for this school district?

As a researcher, this methodology is best suited to study the quality of educational life in the kindergarten classrooms observed. Educational Connoisseurship and Educational Criticism are designed to provide a vivid picture of what has occurred or has been accomplished so that practice and/or policy can be informed and the field of education can continue to improve.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe what current educational practice and demands have imposed on today’s kindergarten programs. The work contained herein analyzes one Colorado school district’s interpretation of NCLB legislation and follows that interpretation into practice within three kindergarten classroom settings. Of special interest will be the ways in which individual teachers include their own beliefs about educational best practices within the institutional expectations of increased academic achievement.

Research Questions

Four primary questions guide the following investigation:

1. What does kindergarten look like in this school district?
2. What is the current state of play in the kindergarten classroom?
3. Are teachers establishing practices responsive to the cognitive, social and emotional well-being of kindergartners, while at the same time adhering to the requirements of the district and/or the state and federal government?
4. How do contemporary kindergarteners themselves reflect upon or view the kinds (and amount) of play which they engage in within the school day?

Participants Used in the Study

Pseudonyms were used throughout the study for the schools, district, county and participants to honor anonymity. I submitted the narrative that I wrote to each of the individuals interviewed. Each individual then had the opportunity to provide feedback on accuracy.

Site Selection and Data Collection

Four primary methods were used to collect data:

1. Observation

Mountain View School District was selected due to the proximity of the district to my home. I gained access to the district through the superintendent. Three schools within the district volunteered to participate: I met with the principals to discuss my research in more detail, reviewing my objectives, methodology, and observation schedule. Next, I interviewed both principals and kindergarten teachers at three sites. A consent letter was

sent home to kindergarten families in all three sites to gain access to interview kindergarten students. I interviewed 49 kindergarten students for this study.

I scheduled my first school observation at Springs Elementary School, followed by Park Elementary School and Eisenhower Elementary School. Within each school, I observed one kindergarten class during the period of October 2008 through May 2009; spending one hundred hours of observation in all. Most classroom observations lasted the entire school day. I used composition notebooks to record my observations of the school, classroom, and playground environments and my descriptions of the lessons and of student-teacher exchanges.

To understand further the climate and overall goals of each school, I also attended a Professional Learning Community meeting at each site. Additionally, I attended a school board meeting.

2. Interviews

To fully appreciate the district's culture, intentions, mission, and the day-to-day occurrences, I conducted formal interviews with the superintendent and curriculum director. I also conducted formal interviews with the three site principals, the three site kindergarten teachers, and 49 kindergartners.

All interviews were conducted during planning periods, after school, or on days I was not scheduled to observe all day. The time devoted to each of the interviews took up to one hour. All interviews were taped and later transcribed. Additionally, informal conversations of varying lengths were conducted throughout my time at each site. These conversations were helpful in answering questions regarding my observations.

3. Documents

I gathered various documents at each school site and at the district office to inform my research. These documents included handbooks, letters to parents, curriculum guides, report cards, birthdays of each kindergartner, IB information, hand-outs to kindergarten parents, mission statements, interpretation of NCLB within the district and within each school setting, building lay-out, and displays in hallways and classrooms.

4. Artifacts

In each classroom, I listened to what narrative themes emerged during the children's free choice time and recess time. Detailed field notes and memos were kept. Kindergarten students were asked to draw interpretations of play within the school day. These visual interpretations were collected and photocopied to enable each student to keep his or her own work and allow me access to the original. I then coded the responses given to me by the students at each site. The first coding was if play was represented in the classroom or on the playground. The second coding used Smilansky's continuum of play: functional, constructive, dramatic, and games-with-rules. I wanted to ascertain what types of play the children were engaged in during the school day.

Analysis

The following frameworks were used in the final chapter of this dissertation for analysis of the data collected:

Conceptual Framework: Educational Connoisseurship. Following is an outline of the conceptual framework that was used to provide a structure and guide me in the

collection of data using Elliot Eisner's model of Educational Connoisseurship and

Criticism. My elaboration upon Eisner's five dimensions was as follows:

The Intentional Dimension

- Interviews with the superintendent, curriculum director, principals, and teachers.
- Review of written documents on program structures, overviews of kindergarten curriculum, interpretation of NCLB for Mountain View School District, handouts to kindergarten parents on the structure and purpose of kindergarten, and parent handbooks.
- Review of staff development in the area of play in kindergarten and NCLB.
- Review any speaker series offered by the district to parents.
- Review parent education sponsored by the school district.
- Review the school district mission statement and the mission statement of each school site.
- Review the aims and goals of the school district and each individual site (and how these goals pertain to NCLB)

The Structural Dimension

- Review the structure of the day at each site.
- Review the routines established.
- Review rites of passage: what is celebrated?
- How is time and space used in the kindergarten classroom and the playground?
- How are objects used within the classroom?
- What is the length and frequency of recess, or classroom playtime?
- Who supervises recess, choice time within the classroom?
- What types of play occur within the classroom and playground setting?
- How does play get facilitated?
- What is the range of ages within each kindergarten class (any evidence of red-shirting)?

The Curricular Dimension

- Observations and interviews with kindergarten students, kindergarten teachers, and principals.
- Interviews with the superintendent and curriculum director.
- How is NCLB interpreted for kindergarten?
- What are the goals of kindergarten within the district and at each site?
- Is there a dedicated play area within the classroom space?
- Who decides what is to be played?
- What are children doing?
- What type of play is occurring? Functional? Constructive? Dramatic? Games-with-Rules?

- Who is doing the work?
- What is the duration of the play?
- Is there any evidence of integration of curriculum objectives and play?
- How is growth demonstrated?
- How is growth shared with parents?
- What is the current state of report cards or grading systems within the district?
- Variation between school sites?

The Pedagogical Dimension

- What are the teaching styles within each kindergarten setting?
- What is the range of teacher experience?
- What is the primary instructional mode within each kindergarten setting?
- What is the intention of play within the kindergarten classroom setting?
- What is the belief on play (and is it valued)?
 - From the superintendent
 - From the curriculum director
 - From each individual principal
 - From each individual kindergarten teacher
 - From individual kindergartners themselves

The Evaluative Dimension

- How are kindergarten teachers evaluated in Mountain View School District?
- Collection of formal evaluation data from observations and interviews.
- Archival data of district information.
- What tools are used to evaluate kindergarten students' growth?
- What is tested?
- Are different ways of knowing valued? Encouraged?
- Are play-based observations and assessments used?
 - If so, how does the teacher, principal, curriculum director, or superintendent use this data?
 - How is it reported to parents?
 - How is it reported to students?

Conceptual Framework: Educational Criticism.

Description

- Collect data from all sources
- Structural corroboration (multiple data sources)
- Write narrative of the data
- Through process understand, interpret, appraise educational phenomena

Interpretation

- Take narrative from dimension one (description), and begin to apply meaning to it.
- How? Why? Explain patterns.
- If patterns emerge, derive from the story then work to create meaning from it.
- Weave in theory, if pertinent, to provide an interpretive framework to account for what has been described.

Evaluation

- Appraise experiences that have been described and interpreted
- Imagined?
- Use multiple data sources
- Look at various perspectives
- Use documents, archival information, observation, artifacts, interviews
- Structural corroboration (multiple data sources)

Thematics

- Use three previous dimensions
- Build upon analysis of data
- From particulars create analysis based on themes

The Researcher

It is important to state researcher assumptions up front and admit any biases. In 1980 I obtained a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. I obtained a master's degree in elementary education in 1984. I taught kindergarten for eight years from 1988 to 1996. I bring to the study both a firm belief in developmentally appropriate practices and experiential knowledge of young children's growth and development. As a constructivist, I believe that all children need time and direct physical and social experience to construct their own understandings of the world around them. They do not passively take in information from the world around them and learn it; rather, they actively transform it into something that is personally meaningful to them. To me, play is a vital part of the whole process of constructing meaning.

Embarking on the journey of completing a PhD offered me the opportunity to meet educators throughout the state of Colorado. My cohort was comprised of public school teachers and administrators. Learning from my public school colleagues about No Child Left Behind and Annual Yearly Progress broadened my knowledge and awareness. As an outsider to the NCLB reform movement, I wanted to find out for myself what, if anything, has changed in current kindergartens. I bring to the study both hope and the belief that kindergarten is indeed a garden for children's learning and a healthy pessimism that teachers cannot navigate through the myriad layers of compliance to provide that garden for children.

Limitations

There are many limiting factors in this study. Additional concerns might include:

1. The sample in this study is a convenience sample by location. It represents a very small sample of Colorado schools identified as having a kindergarten program.
2. The findings of the study are subject to the limitations associated with the brief duration of the study (less than one year), the use of interview data collection, and the use of observation. In the beginning of my data collection, my observation days at one site were limited to Mondays only due to my own professional responsibilities as Director of Lower School in a small independent school. Mondays were early release days for Mountain View School District and students were released at 3:00 rather than 3:45 for faculty to meet in Professional Learning Communities. In January 2009 I was diagnosed with cancer, endured surgery, and

took a six— week medical leave. In the two remaining school sites I spent approximately one week in each classroom (Monday through Thursday).

3. The sample for this study does not address the perceptions of every kindergarten teacher, kindergartner, principal, superintendent, curriculum director, and kindergarten parent in the district. The sample is limited to the individuals in this study.
4. A further limitation of the study is the lack of ethnic diversity of the school personnel interviewed as well as the narrow experience of two of the three kindergarten teachers.

Chapter Four: Mountain View School District

Play is the original abstract thinking.

Vivian Gussin Paley

This study was conducted in the pseudonymous Mountain View School District, a small public school district in the central Rocky Mountains of Colorado, during the 2008-2009 academic year. This chapter is divided into four sections: demographics; district mission, intentions, goals, and priorities; interview summary from the superintendent; and the interview summary from the curriculum director.

Demographics

The school district reports (2008, October 1)) an estimated total population of 3,067 students. Demographic data from the school district describes the population as predominantly white, 70.6 percent with 27 percent of the population reported as Hispanic and 2.4 percent reported as other. Females comprised of 48.4 percent of the student population with males reported as 51.6 percent. The following table outlines the ethnic breakdown at Mountain View School District.

Table 4.1.
Ethnic Breakdown in Mountain View School District

Ethnicity	Student Percentage
White	70.6%
Hispanic	27.0%
Other	2.4%

District statistics include the following:

- Free and reduced lunch: 28.9%
- ELA Students: 20.9%
- Special Needs Students: 10.1%
- Gifted and Talented (K-5): 3.2%
- Head Start: 1.0%

The 2008-2009 school year reports 248 teachers in the district, 167 support staff, and 15 administrators. Ninety-five employees within the district have a master's or doctoral degree.

In November 2007 the citizens of this school district passed an important ballot initiative. The initiative, a mill levy, provides funding for facility safety, security improvements, and funding for full-day kindergarten in the district. The majority of the students within the district had attended a full-day kindergarten program but at the expense of each individual family. With the passage of the recent initiative, all students attend a full-day kindergarten program without fee.

District Mission, Intentions, Goals and Priorities

The school district has a vision statement which reads: *Mountain View School District students, staff and community members work together in an atmosphere of care and respect to offer each student as array of educational programs designed to foster his/her unique academic, vocational, and personal strengths. Our aim is to develop internationally minded people who help to create a better world.*

The mission statement for this school district is as follows: *In a safe environment, we will do whatever it takes for the academic and character success of every student to develop as a lifelong learner and responsible citizen. In order to accomplish this, we will engage every student every day in intellectually challenging and meaningful learning to give all students the resources necessary to prepare them to achieve their greatest potential and to meet the expectations of the future.*

The school district also published a goal statement that reads as follows:

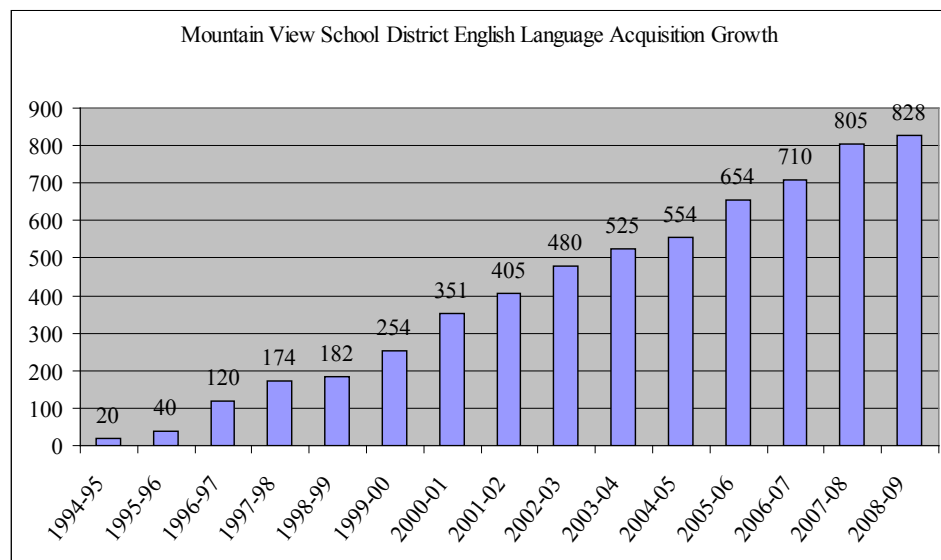
Goal: Developing Caring Learners- Every Mountain View School District student will develop as a caring learner by demonstrating at least a year's growth in academic achievement and by showing an increase in behaviors associated with positive character development.

To achieve the vision, mission, and goal statement, the district has started the implementation of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme in all of its schools. Additionally, Mountain View School District is one of six school districts in the state of Colorado to participate in a state pilot project to close the achievement gap between low

socio-economic and minority students and the high achievement of other students in the district through the *Success for all Students (SFAS)* project.

Success for all Students. Mountain View School District has seen tremendous growth in English Language Acquisition over the past fifteen years. Twenty students were non-English speaking as reported in 1994-1995 to 828 non-English speaking students in the fall of 2008. In 1997 a major ski corporation purchased three ski areas in the Mountain View School District communities and merged the corporation with two additional ski areas from a nearby community. This move increased sales on the mountain (skier days) as well as providing an increased need for more services: housekeeping, maintenance, and food service. The following graph illustrates the growth in English Language Acquisition over the last 15 years in Mountain View School District.

Figure 4.1.
Mountain View School District English Language Acquisition Growth



Although many other school districts throughout Colorado experience gaps in student performance that exceed the state average, the six districts selected show promise for success in the pilot project. In being identified as a partner in this project, the Colorado Department of Education has demonstrated their genuine interest in helping school districts meet this challenge and has recognized that higher student achievement for minority and poverty level students requires the investment of significant additional resources.

Funding through federal funds has been committed to this project by the Colorado Department of Education and each district has been promised up to \$300,000 per year for three years to develop sustainable systems and practices that affect higher achievement in reading and math for the targeted students.

The best strategy for closing the gap was agreed to be one of raising the achievement for all students and significantly impacting the achievement of the ELLs by committing to a system-wide, comprehensive improvement plan. For Mountain View School District this also includes the integration of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme into the plan.

The *Success for all Students* project began with a Comprehensive Appraisal of District Improvement (CADI) visit by a team of educators who spent a full week in the district observing practices and interviewing staff, students, and parents. This visit resulted in a full report that identified Mountain View School District strengths and challenges.

The Mid-Continental Research for Education and Learning (McRel) organization was selected by Mountain View School District stakeholders from the list of seven providers identified for the pilot districts by the Colorado Department of Education to provide the support needed for closing the achievement gap. The intent of this three year partnership is to improve operations within the school district that work to close the achievement gap while raising levels of achievement for all students and that continue after the partnership with McRel and the Colorado Department of Education ends.

Administrators, teachers, parents, and Board members reviewed and discussed the Comprehensive Appraisal of District Improvement (CADI) report offering suggestions regarding the development of a three-year plan to close the achievement gap. Three goal areas determined to most likely close the achievement gap and raise levels of achievement for all students were identified to include reading, math, and inclusion. These goals were then written in the Strategic Measureable Attainable Results-oriented Time— bound (SMART) format:

SMART Goal Statement #1 Focus for Goal: High Expectations for ALL resulting in high achievement/growth for ALL students.

- To close the District's aggregate (3-10) achievement gap between English as a Second Language (ESL) and Non-ESL students scoring Proficient/Advanced in **READING** (2008 CSAP gap=59%) to less than the 2008 statewide aggregate gap (53%), while increasing the already high levels of achievement of Non-ESL students, by spring 2011.

SMART Goal Statement #2 Focus for Goal: High Expectations for ALL resulting in high achievement/growth for ALL students.

- To close the District's aggregate (3-10) achievement gap between English as a Second Language (ESL) and Non-ESL students scoring Proficient/Advanced in **MATH** (2008 CSAP gap=42%) to less than the 2008 statewide aggregate gap (34%), while increasing the already high levels of achievement of Non-ESLs, by spring 2011.

For the 2008-2009 academic school year, the support that McRel provided the school district was training for school and district level administrators in the areas of understanding and using data (Power of Data), leadership development (District Level Leadership), *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners* (Hill & Flynn, 2006), and classroom walkthroughs (Power Walkthroughs) facilitated by building principals.

In addition, the district will continue to support the development of the Professional Learning Group model that supports teacher leadership. Teacher leaders will also be included in the *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners* trainings and in ongoing support of the Professional Learning Group model. Additionally, these teachers will facilitate the learning of their peers with the strategies of *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners*, in their own schools. McRel will also support the review and development of curriculum work in the areas of reading and math. This work will include the leading of trainings in best

practices for developing curriculum, including “unpacking standards,” reviewing and forming Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs), and curriculum mapping.

The International Baccalaureate Programme. The IB Programme believes that it must prepare students to be active participants in a lifelong journey of learning to face the challenges of the 21st century where knowledge in the interconnected world will be constantly developing. The IB Primary Years Programme is geared toward students aged three to twelve, and focuses on the development of the whole child, as an inquirer, within both the classroom setting and “in the world” settings. According to the International Baccalaureate Organization (2007) the Programme consists of four components:

- Encouraging international-mindedness,
- Encouraging a positive attitude towards learning,
- Reflecting real life by encouraging learning beyond traditional subjects with meaningful, in-depth inquires into real issues,
- Emphasis, through the learner profile, on the development of the whole student: physically, intellectually, emotionally, and ethically.

The Programme is designed to be used in international, national, state, and independently funded schools. The written curriculum is comprised of six transdisciplinary themes. The six themes have global significance and are as follows:

- Who we are,
- Where we are in place and time,
- How we express ourselves,
- How the world works,

- How we organize ourselves, and
- Sharing the planet.

Each theme is addressed each year by all students, creating an upward spiral of learning. The exception to this is the preschool programme which addresses four of the themes each year. In addition, language, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, and personal, social, and physical education are also taught within the school day. The taught curriculum is through the six transdisciplinary themes, which are created by teams of teachers in an inquiry format. According to IB (2007) “The inquiries are substantial, in-depth and usually last for several weeks.”

IB (2007) further states:

All students will know that a unit of inquiry will involve them in in-depth exploration of an important idea, and that the teacher will be collecting evidence of how well they understand that idea. They will expect to be able to work in a variety of ways, including on their own and in groups, to allow them to learn to their best advantage.

Assessment is the third prong in this framework (the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the assessed curriculum): “Assessment is an important part of each unit of inquiry as it both enhances learning and provides opportunities for students to reflect on what they know, understand and can do” (IB 2007).

How does *Success for all Students (SFAS)* and the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Programme affect kindergarten teachers and kindergarten students in Mountain View School District?

The entire Mountain View School District is working toward the incorporation of the International Baccalaureate Programme framework in addition to participation in the

SFAS project. With that said, central administration and the school board of Mountain View have given each school site tremendous autonomy.

Interview Summary with Superintendent

Dr. Howard has been superintendent of Mountain View School District for the past five years. She has been employed by Mountain View the last eight years. She is in her thirty-third year as a public educator. She has taught across the kindergarten through middle school levels.

Under her leadership the school district has implemented the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme in all of its schools. Each of the six elementary schools in the district are at various stages of implementation. The middle school has adopted IB as well as the high school. Howard (interview notes, November 24, 2008) further explained:

I have been with the school district since the inception of the IB programme. The programme started in our middle school with a small group of students. The middle school faculty and staff saw the value of the programme and insisted it be implemented school-wide.

Dr. Howard (interview notes, November 24, 2008) further elaborated on IB in Mountain View School District:

As superintendent of Mountain View School District, my obligation is to look at programming from a preschool through twelfth grade perspective. The IB programme was met with success in the middle school but should one program happen during the middle years of education and not before nor after? During the 2007-2008 academic year it came to a public discussion and the Board of Education voted and a decision was made to implement the IB programme preschool through twelfth grade in Mountain View School District, all schools and for all students.

Dr. Howard (interview notes, November 24, 2008) continued to explain the reasoning behind full adoption of IB in her school district:

IB is a framework, not a curriculum. It requires our teachers to work collaboratively to develop units of inquiry. It ensures that topics are not repeated year after year.

Dr. Howard (interview notes, November 24, 2008) tied the focus of IB with the district intentions of Essential Learning Outcomes:

IB and the district's Essential Learning Outcomes are linked and are not treated as separate entities. The skills highlighted in our ELOs are embedded in the IB units of inquiry. The IB programme also provides the district with a framework for character education through the learner attitudes: *appreciation, commitment, confidence, cooperation, creativity, empathy, enthusiasm, independence, integrity, respect, and tolerance*. These character traits or attitudes are emphasized throughout all grade levels and in all school sites in Mountain View School District.

According to Dr. Howard, Mountain View is the only school district in the *SFAS* grant recipients that is also trying to implement IB district-wide. Mountain View School District has implemented NCLB through the state testing, CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program); CSAP is given in grades three through ten. The district is held accountable to AYP to meet the standards that are set through CSAP. Dr. Howard was quick to point out that Mountain View School District is not a district that has set that as their main or only objective; the district wants a well-rounded educational experience, happy children who love coming to school and, who love their teachers, and parents who feel their children are challenged. Howard (interview notes, November 24, 2008) elaborated on this:

Those kinds of experiences aren't measured in one test, any one test, they just aren't. We strongly believe that, yes, CSAP has its place, and it is important, but we just cannot measure the value of an educational experience on one assessment. Education is so much broader than that.

When posed the question, “How has kindergarten curriculum changed over time?” Dr. Howard agreed that it has changed significantly. She taught in a neighboring community from 1980 to 1990 and the assumption was that children were too young to read or write in kindergarten. Formalized instruction in reading and writing started in first grade. The kindergarten was much more center-based filled with fun activities. As Howard further noted that kindergarten classrooms are different today. Children can do reading and writing and have high and reasonable expectations to do so.

Interview Summary with Curriculum Director

Mr. Williams is an expert on the International Baccalaureate Programme. He has been in education for thirty years. His focus in education has been at the secondary level. He has been with Mountain View School District for two years. Prior to his tenure at Mountain View, he was employed in a large public school district on the front range of Colorado, where he introduced International Baccalaureate to that district, first to a high school and then to a middle school.

He oversees the IB Programme at all levels for the district with the help of three IB coordinators (one at each level: elementary, middle, and high school). Currently, both the middle and high school are authorized programmes as well as two of the elementary schools; two elementary schools are half —way through the application process, and the final two elementary schools are just starting the process of application to IB.

In my interview with Mr. Williams (December 11, 2008) he commented,

The more I learn about the programme the more focused I become in believing that it truly represents the best in education. It is not just a curriculum that is handed to you, but it really is an approach to teaching. It is a framework for

teaching. You really get into the teaching strategies and pedagogy, and that's what I really find that I love, and it keeps me engaged.

The night before my interview with Mr. Williams I attended a Board of Education meeting for the district. At that presentation a high school student spoke, and I was struck with the notion that IB might be widening the gap for this district by what the student related. I posed the question to Mr. Williams (interview notes, December 11, 2008) the following day. His response was:

The *SFAS* opportunity and McRel as the provider, we are looking at what educational strategies are effective for ELL, so they can access the higher level thinking curriculum (IB) at the same level or close to the same level as native English speakers can. Because what often happens, if they don't have the language, often teachers think they cannot access the higher level curriculum so it is how we do it—cultivate their thinking and creativity so that they aren't limited to just knowledge and skills but they also get to deal with the higher level concepts. What we want to make sure of is that we are engaging our second language learners with the higher level concepts so they are engaged in the learning process and many are not motivated because they are at such a low level because their language isn't fully developed. So I am hoping that the *SFAS* process is going to help get those kids access to the higher level thinking process. I'll just throw this out there, when you talk about play, to me, the IB curriculum is really about mental play, mental gymnastics. It is getting kids to engage their minds and have fun with thoughts. Often that is what is missing in traditional curriculums—it is all about knowledge and skills and rote. Does that play into your concept of play? To me, it is really play when you get to play with ideas.

Chapter Five: Springs Elementary School

Play is training for the unexpected.

Marc Bekoff

In order to provide a vivid and comprehensive picture of Springs Elementary School, this chapter is divided into five sections. We begin with observations drawn from the Professional Learning Community meeting, followed by insights offered by the school principal. The third section presents snapshot observations from the classroom and school environment I observed between November 2008 and January 2009. In this section I try to ascertain how one kindergarten teacher addressed both the school's and district's intentions while operating under her own beliefs about kindergarten instruction and culture. The fourth section outlines the kindergarten curriculum at Springs Elementary School. Lastly, the chapter ends with illustrations of how contemporary kindergartners' reflect upon or view the kinds of play they engage in within the school day.

Professional Learning Community at Springs Elementary School

I stayed one afternoon and attended the school's Professional Learning Community meeting. The faculty gathered in the media center from 3:20 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. There were twenty faculty members present — one male and nineteen female — all were Anglo. The group reviewed the norms or standards for the meeting, including respect for time, the use of "I" statements, the use of humor, and maintenance of a

positive attitude throughout the meeting. All faculty were asked to look under their chairs — placed underneath the chair was a card. Four teachers had cards with stars and each won a prize: a package of Sharpies, a watch, a planner, or four bumblebee beanbags. This meeting illustrates a playful way to start a meeting for all the adults in the building.

The group was then asked to focus their attention to four large charts located throughout the room. The four charts were labeled:

Teacher expectations

Extracurricular activities

Parental involvement

Cultural

The group divided into four groups of five, and each group started at one of the charts. The task was to look at the activity and reflect on what is done at Springs Elementary to support it. What do we do well? What can we fine tune? What should our next steps look like? Each group was given 12 minutes at each chart. The groups were multi-grade and I overheard much conversation.

The groups remained focused and on task and completed a good deal of work in the time allotment. Once all groups had made it around to all four charts, the groups reported out their ideas. There was much sharing, excitement, and engagement from the adults. The group came to consensus on several needs: greater integration of cultural diversity into the curriculum, the need for transportation to school in the evenings when the school hosts events, the need for more time in the school day and school year, and the need for more parent involvement, including the possibility of a “make and take” evening

where parents make games to take home to help their children consolidate skills. This activity lasted for one hour and twenty-five minutes.

The school's principal, Mrs. Herman, then addressed the group and shared the district's new initiative with McRel: Power Walkthroughs. This technique is used by the principal to gauge the use of Best Practices in the classroom. The Power Walkthroughs are observations which allow for reflective dialogue between administrators and teachers. The process takes three to five minutes to complete and Mrs. Herman can use software on her iPhone to record data. The categories that she'll focus on are all part of the *SFAS* work: Instructional Strategy, Context, Technology Used, Type of Knowledge, Evidence of Learning, and Student Interview. This technique holds the principal at each district site accountable as the superintendent can up-load the data and look for trends. The tool is meant to hone in on teacher effectiveness. Mrs. Herman will ideally gather three to eight observations to generate conversation. She hopes the *Rule of Twenty* will enable her to see patterns in the walkthroughs. The meeting was dismissed at 5:00 p.m.

Description of Springs Elementary School

Springs Elementary School is the newest school site in Mountain View School District. The building opened in 2004. The school is the second largest elementary school in the district and one of the most diverse. Springs Elementary School is a Title One school. The 2008-2009 enrollment data is 330 students enrolled in preschool through fifth grade. Even though the community passed the mill levy in the fall of 2007 to fund the full-day kindergarten program in 2008-2009 in Mountain View School District, Springs Elementary School has made it mandatory for the past three years. Mrs. Herman is the

principal of Springs Elementary School and has been in education for 34 years. She has been in administration for the past ten years and prior to that taught physical education for 24 years. Mrs. Herman (interview notes, November 3, 2008) has supported a full-day kindergarten program at her school and says: “We have pretty much just told parents that your child needs to come all day, every day. And for parents who could not afford the other half day we found a way to get that scholarship through funds from a local foundation. So it is not really even presented as an option here.”

Mrs. Herman (interview notes, November 3, 2008) believes kindergarten has changed over the years and finds that many of her incoming kindergartners have little to no exposure to academic, social or emotional skills and strategies. “With the requirements for state testing at third grade if we don’t start literacy and math in kindergarten they just aren’t going to be ready. A lot of the kids at the kindergarten level cannot speak in complete sentences and only in one or two words —so, yes; kindergarten has changed immensely over the past few years.”

Fifty percent of the students at Springs Elementary School are non-white, and approximately 48 percent speak a language other than English at home. The school reported a mobility rate of 30.7 percent in 2007-08. Fifty-three percent of the students qualify for free or reduced priced lunch. This statistic is up from 50 percent from the 2006-2007 academic year.

In January 2009 the school introduced a breakfast program, and approximately 100 students participate in this program daily. This program was initiated by the principal, Mrs. Herman, because she was worried that the students came to school hungry

and without breakfast. On December 15, 2008, Mrs. Herman approached me and asked if I was willing to contribute to a fund to purchase food for families within her school community during the December holiday. She was worried that many of her students who qualify for free or reduced breakfast and lunch would go hungry without school in session. Bags of bread, peanut butter and pasta were assembled and delivered to many families within the Springs Elementary School community during the two week holiday break.

The school offers art, music, physical education, opportunities for civic or community engagement, an internet safety program, extracurricular activities, athletics, and before-and-after-school care programs.

The school's goals are as follows:

- Goal One: Implementation of the International Baccalaureate Programme Primary Years Programme. The Primary Years Programme (PYP) incorporates the use of best practice in instruction for all children.
- Goal Two: Improvement in Writing. Progress was made in the area of writing in 2006-07, particularly in grades three and four. However, writing scores still lag behind reading and math.
- Goal Three: Character Development. This is an ongoing goal to show a years' growth in individual character development. The PYP Attitudes, Learner Profile, and bully proofing are at the center of this goal.

Springs Elementary School made AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) in reading but did not make AYP in math, as reported for the 2007-08 academic year. Based on this outcome

parents were informed that their child may be eligible for extra academic instruction before or after school or in the summer and/or opportunities for mentoring. Since Springs Elementary School did not make AYP in math, is there an increase in academic preparation and pressure to teach of math?

The school's mission statement is as follows: *The Springs Elementary School and our community strive to achieve high academic standards, personal responsibility, and inspire a lifelong love of learning.* The school has a touchstone which reads: *Be respectful, be responsible, be safe, and be ready.*

The school employs 22 full-time teachers and five part-time teachers, one librarian, a part-time counselor, and one administrator. The school employs one full-time support staff member. The school also has three full-time paraprofessionals and one part-time paraprofessional. The average years of teaching experience at this site is nine years. Fourteen employees have a master's or doctoral degree at Springs Elementary. There are three kindergarten classrooms at Springs Elementary School. I spent my time in Mrs. Wilson's class.

Snapshots from the Classroom and School Environment at Springs Elementary School

Monday, December, 8, 2008. Springs Elementary School is situated off a two-lane highway and occupies a large parcel of land. Adjacent to the school is a lovely pond and walking path. The school is situated just outside the main section of the town and is close to many housing divisions. The parking lot occupies the front of school, and the main doors are clearly marked and welcoming. Upon entering the building one is greeted with two sets of glass doors, and the main office is to the left of the entry-way. In the foyer a

door-mat welcomes the community, and a large stuffed black bear catches your eye. The black bear is the mascot of the school. There are various flyers in the foyer promoting events in the school or in the wider community. The flyers are printed in English and in Spanish. There is also a showcase that has school store items on display along with information on the Box Tops for Education program. Hanging from the ceiling throughout the corridors of the school are the IB Attitude banners. Students' art-work graces the walls throughout the two-story school.

Throughout my time at Springs Elementary School children and adults in the community were treated with respect. The school provided structure, routine, food, intellectual stimulation, an outlet for creativity, and opportunities for socialization. The staff impressed me with their professionalism and dedication to the students in their care.

The kindergarten classroom of Mrs. Wilson is immediately to the right of the front door. The square room is spacious, with a bank of windows facing south. The classroom is warm, organized, and filled with supplies. There is a church pew located near the bathroom with a quilt tossed over the side. Next to the pew is a small table for individual work, complemented by a small lamp complete with lampshade. Tucked into nooks and bookshelves are touches of teddy bears, stuffed snowmen, quilts, and wooden ABC blocks. Often, a tabletop is graced with a vase of fresh flowers — a touch of color during the long winter months in this mountain town. Mrs. Wilson is a veteran teacher with 26 years of teaching experience; she has spent the last seven years teaching kindergarten.

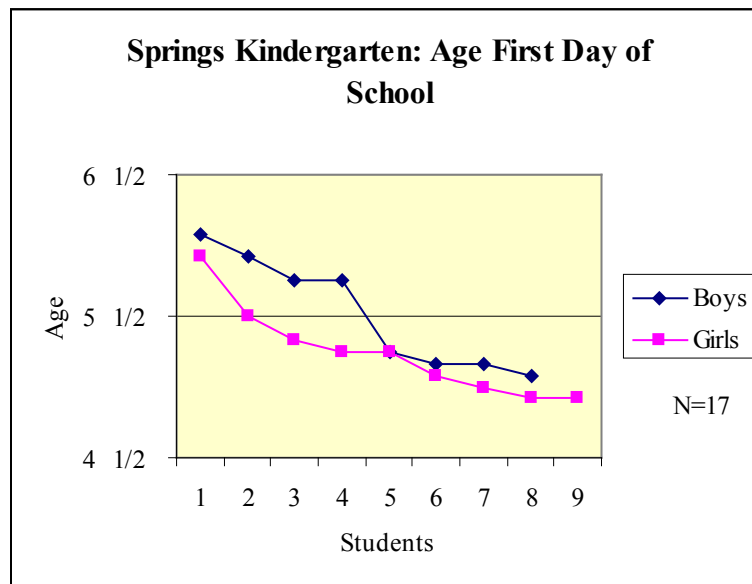
Mrs. Wilson has a gentle, warm, and calming demeanor. Language is displayed throughout the room on charts for songs, in books, and on posters related to material currently being taught. Seasonal fabric is draped over shelves and books related to the fabric theme are displayed and changed often. Mrs. Wilson has a wall next to her desk devoted to work by children including notes, coloring sheets, and cards.

In a prominent area of the room there is a play area. A portion of the area resembles a house complete with ironing board, dolls (Anglo and Hispanic dolls are represented), and a collection of various hats: fire chief hat, sombrero, and race car driver hat. Another portion of this area has a tool bench for hammering, drilling, and pounding. Mrs. Wilson has a huge storage closet in the back of the room with tubs and tubs of seasonal and thematic units. The room is inviting!

The kindergarten class is comprised of seventeen students. The range of ages on the first day of school, August 27, 2008, was four years and eleven months to six years and one month. The average age of the kindergarten class on the first day of school was five years and four months. The average age on the first day of school for boys was five years and five months, and for girls the average age on the first day of school was five years and two months. As part of the research design I wanted to look closely at the entrance age of kindergartners to see if parents or administrators in this school district were delaying entrance. The boys in Mrs. Wilson's class were older than the girls on the first day of kindergarten. The oldest boy in the class started kindergarten at six years and one month because of parental concerns with maturity. The following graph illustrates

each kindergartner in Mrs. Wilson's class and their chronological age on August 27, 2008.

Figure 5.1.
Springs Kindergarten: Age First Day of School



The school day begins at 8:45 a.m., and children arrive with snow gear and immediately know where to put their belongings. Mrs. Wilson greets each one at the door, and the students proceed to put their belongings away, along with their folders. Two parents pop in and chat briefly with Mrs. Wilson. As the class settles on to the rug on the floor facing the calendar, a song is heard on the loudspeaker, "Springs Elementary School." Later, I learn the song was written by a former media teacher at the school and is sung by the superintendent! Each Monday morning starts with the singing of this song. Promptly at 8:53 a.m. the class continues with the lunch count and calendar work.

On this given day fourteen students are present and three are absent. Half of the class is comprised of native English speakers and half of the class is comprised of

English Language Learners. Throughout my time in this classroom Mrs. Wilson used Spanish occasionally at the word and phrase level, such as, “Muy Bien,” or “Cuantos?”

Mrs. Wilson proceeds to ask the students about their choice of hot lunch: tacos or sandwiches? She waits for each child to respond politely. As Mrs. Wilson tries to enter the lunch count into her computer, the program fails. “This machine is so *cantankerous*!” Mrs. Wilson uses the situation as a teaching opportunity and helps the students build their own vocabulary development with the word *cantankerous*. Mrs. Wilson employs this strategy throughout my time in her classroom. She appears to value language and works to increase the vocabulary of the students in her care. During my time in this kindergarten classroom Mrs. Wilson never raised her voice. On the contrary, if she wanted the attention of her students, she whispered.

The morning moves along with calendar work at 9:03 a.m. Again, language is stressed and repeated. Each of the following sentences are on stripes of paper and can be moved around: *The month is December. The year is 2008. The next year will be 2009. Today is the 8th. We are in week two of the month. Today is Monday. Tomorrow will be Tuesday.* Students take turns manipulating the stripes and reading them. This activity is routine for the children and appears to help them settle into their day.

The students use place value to show how many days they have been in school. Mrs. Wilson points out that December 21 will mark the first day of winter, followed by the December 22 celebration of Hanukkah, December 25 as Christmas Day, and December 26 as the beginning of Kwanza. Each of these celebrations is indicated on the calendar with a simple tag.

The calendar shifts to the estimation jar. This, too, is a ritual in Mrs. Wilson's class. Every Monday the estimation jar changes, and on Friday the class counts the objects. This Monday the jar is filled with Christmas bells. Mrs. Wilson asks the students to look at the size of the bell. Because of the size of the bell will your guess be big? Or small? Do you think there are more than five bells in the jar? Do you think there are more than ten bells in the jar? Do you think there are more than twenty bells in the jar? No judgment is issued by Mrs. Wilson as she writes down the estimates shared by the students: 17, 42, 20, 25, 22, 10, 17, 80, 16, 12, 25, 19, 85, and 60. A few times Mrs. Wilson interjects Spanish and asks, "Cuantos?" This is an illustration of a playful way to engage students in mathematical concepts without workbook pages.

At 9:24 a.m. calendar is finished, and the students move to another part of the room and gather in a circle to sing songs and have a movement break. Everyone knows exactly what to do during this time, and all seem to enjoy the playful diversion with music and song. All the words to the various songs and chants are written on a flip chart so all have access to more print and language. The class sings "S-A-N-T-A, Did You Ever See a Reindeer?" and "I'm a Little Pine Tree." Much laughter was expressed as well as singing and movement. I found it delightful to witness this playful interaction. All children, regardless of their first language, were singing along and moving to the beat.

At 9:30 a.m. the class begins to divide and go to various other rooms for language arts instruction. The kindergarten class is ability-grouped for language arts instruction. As new students enter the room, Mrs. Wilson hugs them and greets them. The transition is seamless, and students know what is expected of them. Mrs. Wilson has eleven students

for the next half hour in language arts instruction. She works through several groups, completes book walks with each group and sends home a new book to be enjoyed with family. As Mrs. Wilson works with a small group the remainder of the class works independently or in small groups on games or worksheets with a literacy emphasis. Often, the activities encourage risk-taking, sharing, taking turns, eye-hand coordination — not always paper/pencil activities.

At 10:00 a.m. all children returned to their classrooms and enjoyed snack. Most students bring their own healthy snacks: cheese, crackers, pretzels, raisins, and various fruits. If a child is without a snack, Mrs. Wilson provides them cold cereal. The children are very self-sufficient and enjoy quiet chatter with their classmates.

At 10:10 a.m. snack is winding down; a few children start combing the room for books to read. One child immediately notices a few pages are falling out of a book and asks Mrs. Wilson for help stapling them back into the book. She helps him with ease and in a soothing manner.

At 10:13 a.m. all gather around a rocking chair and Mrs. Wilson. A parent volunteer is present most days for the writing activity. Mrs. Wilson continues the morning work by reviewing with children the various countries in the world and their holiday traditions. She pulls down a world map and refers to England, Germany, and Scandinavia. She shares that today she is going to read a book by Jan Brett entitled, *Trouble with Trolls* (1992). She sets the stage for the children by explaining that trolls aren't real, but they are pretend. Mrs. Wilson (field notes, December 8, 2008) reviews her expectations for students during the read-aloud, "Eyes on me. Listen closely so you can

think about what to write in your journal after the story. Be thinking.” Wilson reads with expression and frequently stops to discuss a new vocabulary word. The story is interrupted at 10:35 a.m. with a fire drill. All exit quietly, and the drill is executed smoothly and properly.

At 10:43 a.m. the story resumes. Throughout the story Mrs. Wilson checks for understanding and reviews unknown words. Because of the fire drill there was not time to follow up and write in individual journals; instead the students share out loud their favorite parts of the story. Mrs. Wilson encourages each student to speak in full sentences when sharing. At 10:55 a.m. Mrs. Wilson announces that it is recess time.

Springs Elementary School has two playgrounds: one for the preschool and a larger one for kindergarten through fifth grade. Preschool is not in session on Mondays so the kindergarten uses the smaller playground on Mondays for morning recess. This playground is circular and is fenced in with wire fencing; the space is limited and confining. The playground has new, colorful, and durable apparatuses which include a slide, swings, a digger for sand, a climbing structure, and a play metal bulldozer.

The entire kindergarten plays together on this site and for the most part the group divides by gender. There is much running, laughing, walking, climbing, swinging, sliding, digging, chasing, watching, giggling, and wandering on the playground. There are plenty of opportunities for children to use their gross motor skills during this time as well as negotiating skills, sharing skills, taking turns, and just sharing a laugh or a giggle. Both English and Spanish are spoken by the children for the duration of recess. The

students are engaged in cooperative play — not parallel play, but collaborative play with their peers.

On occasion imaginative play occurs on this playground in the form of superhero play — Batman, Cat Woman, or Bat Woman — much dialogue is shared along with negotiating parts and actions. A small group of children play *Follow the Leader*. The teachers primarily talk among themselves and on occasion are involved with conflict resolution strategies with the students.

At 11:15 a.m. students line up and reenter the building to get ready for lunch. At 11:30 a.m. the kindergarten enters the lunchroom and eats lunch. Teachers are free to have lunch in the teacher's lounge, and a few adults roam the lunchroom, helping with opening containers and cleaning up; no adult sits and eats with the students. The principal is in the kitchen serving lunch to students. The students for the most part keep their jackets on and eat lunch rapidly. Students eat, clean up their area, and exit for the large playground.

The large playground is located at the back of the building and is fenced in as well, but encompasses a large area. The playground is not plowed, and much snow has accumulated during the winter of 2008-2009. There are colorful, new, and durable apparatuses for the children to use, including slides, and swings. There is a hill ideal for sledding, but it is off-limits to the students.

Many students bring out balls and soccer, kickball, or football is played (even with a deflated ball). The organized ball games tend to have older students as participants (grades two through four). I don't observe a kindergartner joining in. Jump ropes come

out too, and even a game of *Ring around the Rosie* is played. There are two teachers on duty who roam the perimeter of the playground.

Imaginative play is observed with a group of girls imitating horses and a group of boys playing superheroes'. There is much laughter, running, shouting, swinging, crawling, and sliding. You can hear both English and Spanish spoken on the playground. Recess ends at 12:20 p.m., and kindergartners then line up for specials at 12:30 p.m.

The first special is physical education with Coach Smith, a seasoned teacher (thirty-plus years) and former principal. Coach Smith has created a gym with ten different stations. The students know just what to do at each station and immediately get to work. Each station focuses on balance, eye-hand movement, tumbling, delayed gratification, eye teaming, conflict resolution, sharing, conversation, and taking turns.

Coach Smith believes in helping students be successful, and he feels providing these types of activities enables students to gain the skills they need to be ready to learn. The tasks the students complete are developmental tasks organized to provide avenues toward readiness for learning the academics. The activities are precursors to learning fine motor skills, reading and writing skills, and also team building. He has done extensive research on brain studies and learning and tries to incorporate these ideas into the kindergarten class period. I wondered what the results would be if this class happened first in the morning, followed by more traditional paper/pen activities, such as the literacy block.

Students spend time on a balance beam, practice cup stacking, catching and throwing balls, balance on a board, and spinning. Coach Smith is upbeat and affirming,

praising the students and checking in on the practice of their skills. The class is on task throughout the 25 minute class.

At 12:55 p.m. the students line up to venture to the media lab. The librarian, Mrs. Jackson welcomes the students at the door — the size of the class increases as another half of a kindergarten class comes in for class too. The students work on the phoneme /j/. They look at the differences and similarities of the lower and upper case /J/ and /j/. They brainstorm all the words they know that start with /j/: jellyfish, Jackson, Jessica, Jesse, jellybeans, Jason, jaguar, jet, Joseph, jacket, jelly, jar, and jeans.

The librarian (field notes, December 8, 2008) then reads a story about jelly beans. After the story she poses the question, “When you hear ‘how many’ what does it make you think? Yes, that’s right, to count!” Following that exchange she shares a large jar of jellybeans and poses the question, “How many jellybeans are in this jar?” The students share their estimations with Mrs. Jackson. The class ends, and then, Mrs. Jackson gives each student a jellybean as they exit the library.

At 1:25 p.m. students return to the classroom for rest time. Shoes are removed from feet, and each kindergartener is lying down on a towel or blanket with a pillow and perhaps a stuffed animal. Quiet music is playing in the background. Mrs. Wilson roams the room and then slips to her desk to catch up on paperwork, work on her computer, or call up individual children for one-on-one time. If a children fall asleep, Mrs. Wilson does not wake them.

At 1:45 p.m. all children are gathered around Mrs. Wilson at the rocking chair as she reads Eve Bunting’s book *The Night Tree* (1991). Again, Mrs. Wilson refers to the

world map, shows where Germany is located, and relays the fact that Germany first introduced Christmas trees to the world. She proceeds to talk about other types of trees: alder, oak, maple, evergreen — use of language and language development is prevalent throughout the day. The students are engaged with the story (the third they have heard today — one in the library at specials time and two in the classroom).

Following this story Mrs. Wilson shares an art project with the students reminiscent of Froebel's paper gifts. Using various shapes and listening carefully to Mrs. Wilson's instructions, the students produced similar looking Christmas trees. The activity is teacher directed and involves following directions, listening, shape and color identification, folding skills, and gluing skills. The activity is from a book entitled *Teaching Little Children* by Espinosa and McCormick (1996). The activity is completed by 2:20 p.m.

At 2:20 p.m. the students are given free choice until 2:50 p.m. Each day I observed in Mrs. Wilson's class the students were given "free choice" or "playtime" for a minimum of thirty minutes and a maximum time allotment of sixty minutes. Mrs. Wilson (interview notes, November 3, 2008) reported:

I am an advocate of play. We do not have a lot of time to play, not only because our district and NCLB — everyone and everything is moving down — and we just have so much pressure to have these kids where they need to be. But my teammates and I are all early childhood people and so we just make them play. We know what's best for kids. So, that's what we do.

Typically, the students played in like gender groups focusing on Lego building; playing with Barbie dolls; coloring; working with a variety of manipulative objects such

as plastic dinosaurs, unifix cubes, teddy bears, or plastic people. Students can also be seen playing in the make-believe area as a family; or playing teacher.

On occasion a child will color alone or play with materials alone. When playing alone the child would sort the given objects by color and then arrange the objects from smallest to largest. Another activity was making patterns with the objects (often imitating what occurred during the calendar portion of the day). I believe these two illustrations demonstrate what Elkind has labeled, “mastery play,” the ability to construct and reconstruct concepts and skills.

One child (the oldest in the class) always chose to color when I observed. He would work meticulously and often would cut out his masterpiece and give it to Mrs. Wilson for her collection of art-work generated by students.

At 2:50 p.m. clean up was started with dismissal pending at 3:00 p.m. At 2:55 p.m. the children gather in a circle to share their “Favorite Thing of the Day.” After students share, Mrs. Wilson hands each child their individual folder to take home and each student lines up. Mrs. Wilson greets the parents, grandparents, and older siblings who come for the kindergartners. She hugs the children good-bye and throws kisses their way. The group is dismissed at 3:00 (because this was a Monday); on all other days, dismissal is at 3:55.

A minute is never spared in this classroom! There is a sense of urgency to stay on track. Mrs. Wilson is deliberate in her preparation and delivery of instruction. She knows the developmental span and capacity of the children in her care. She consistently models patience and kindness to students, their parents, and her colleagues. Mrs. Wilson valiantly

tries to incorporate play into her classroom setting and has compromised to have it occur at the end of each day. She has learned from observing play that many of her students just do not know how to play. A greater percentage of her students have not had preschool and have yet to develop the social skills expanded and facilitated through play.

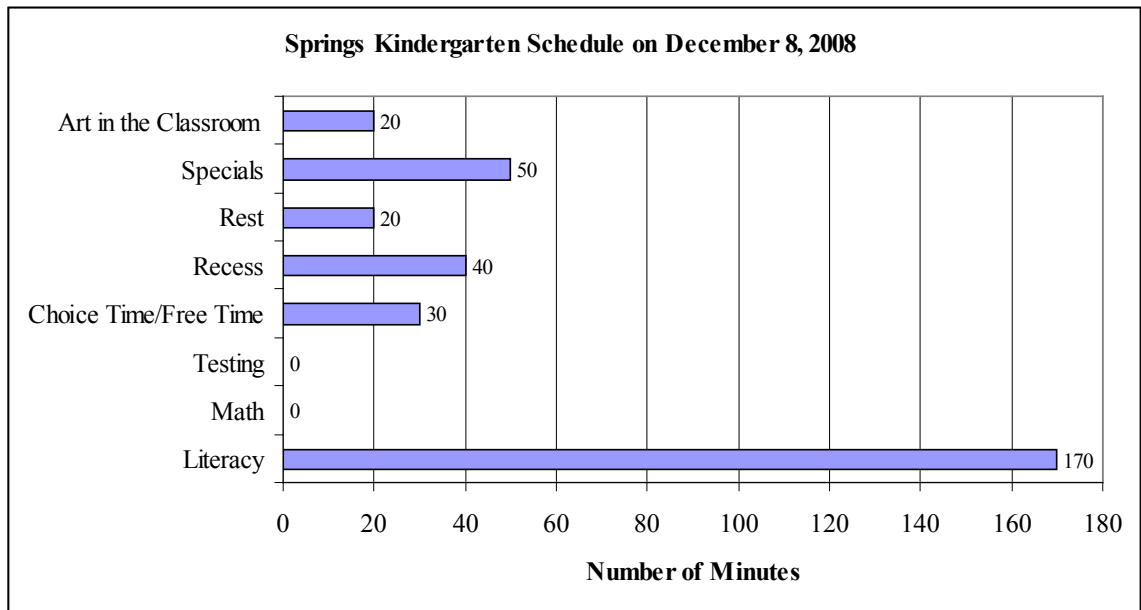
Mrs. Wilson (interview notes, November 3, 2009) noted:

I have learned much from observing play in kindergartners. I have learned what they need from study habits to sticking with a task to language development. You know, they do not know how to play, and a lot of them have not had opportunities to play and unlike a lot of our other elementary schools, we have a percentage that have gone to preschool, but I would say the greater percentage have not. So, they have never been, they have never had the opportunities to play with other children and learn and so that is huge. I mean that's just the biggest thing, whether they are outside on the playground and learning how to problem solve, obviously they want to come to me first of all and tell me it all and it is just an opportunity for them to learn how to problem solve. To be critical thinkers, to figure this out, and then you know you have met their individual needs.

As a researcher, I knew what I had seen throughout the day at Springs Elementary, but needed to visualize just how time was spent in kindergarten. In reviewing my notes, disciplines emerged. I then assigned time to each discipline observed. The following graph illustrates just how time was spent in Springs Elementary School On December 8, 2008.

Figure 5.2.

Time Spent in Springs Elementary Kindergarten: Monday, December 8, 2008



Monday, December, 15, 2008. Students enter the room at 8:45 a.m., and immediately start their day with the lunch count, calendar, and estimation jar activities. At 9:15 a.m. the students gather and begin singing a variety of songs and reciting poems which are written out on large pieces of chart paper for all to see. There is much laughter, joy, and a sense of community as teacher and students work together.

At 9:30 a.m. all kindergarten students go to their assigned reading class. Today there are three tubs of materials out for the children to use: *sound switch* (moving three tiles to make three letter words), *rhyming sound* (matching cards of rhyming objects) and *sound sort* (sorting beginning and ending sounds in words). As students rotate through the centers, Mrs. Wilson meets with small groups and does a picture walk through the text. She uses Houghton-Mifflin books, and students take the stories home each night in special bags to read to their families. Mrs. Wilson is able to work through four groups in

the half hour. Her approach is playful, not scripted from a teacher's guide. Students are encouraged to make predictions, and much vocabulary is discussed.

At 10:00 a.m. students have returned to their classrooms and snack has started. Again, the students are very content to enjoy their snacks and quiet conversation with other children at their tables. At 10:15 snack is over, and the students gather around Mrs. Wilson for a story, *Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree* (Barry, 1963). This is a rhyming story that the students heard last week. The students are eager to "read" with her and shout out the appropriate rhyming word. When the story concludes, Mrs. Wilson asks the students to think about what animal from the story they can write about today. She models her thinking by a think aloud and shares, "This is my favorite part of the story," and draws a tiny mouse. She continues her think aloud in a whispering voice with, "Let me think, now I think I'll add a bit of detail." All students are captivated with her drawing and thinking. Next she adds text to the drawing, matching the words with the picture, "The mouse is having fun." At 10:28 a.m. Mrs. Wilson releases the students to their seats to write and illustrate their favorite scenes from the book. A parent volunteer is there to help the students too.

All are engaged with the task, and the two adults roam and check in with students, encouraging, suggesting, and facilitating vocabulary development. Students have access to tools that will help them: alphabet strips for sound symbol matching and the alphabet for the proper formation of letters. At 10:50 a.m. the writing portion of writer's workshop has ended, and the sharing portion has started. Students are encouraged to share their

work with the group. Many volunteer to share. Writing time ends at 11:00 a.m. It is too cold to go outside for recess, so the children have free playtime in the classroom.

Mrs. Wilson sets out six different activities to pick from for free playtime. Students scatter to different areas in the classroom and begin to play. A small group has decided to work with tangrams, another group is playing with blocks, and a group of five girls is playing with plastic dinosaurs.

There is always much language used during this time of discovery: again both English and Spanish are spoken with ease. Often children move in and out of each language dependent on who is in the group.

School language is also prevalent: “Raise your hand if you want this piece” is overheard in the Lego area, or “Do you like mine?” Using language from the morning work is also heard; “I’m going to Germany.” “I’m going to the North Pole,” when Lego transportation vehicles are being moved from one area to the next. Or, “Catch me if you can,” is overheard after the students read the story, *The Gingerbread Man* (Aylesworth & McClintock, 1998). The structure of play in this classroom environment allows for conversation which in turn promotes both oral language and vocabulary development. Children appear to have positive feelings of well-being and positive self-esteem.

When the children play school, one can overhear the words Mrs. Wilson (field notes, December 15, 2008) had used earlier in the day, “What day of the week is it today? What was yesterday? What will tomorrow be?” Two girls do a fine job of imitating Mrs. Wilson and start their lesson with, “Las ninas...” Language is at the forefront of playtime in this kindergarten classroom.

The boys in this class are much more aggressive in their play and language than the girls. They often use such language as, "I'm going to kick you in the face." The boys also use movement and often use the entire classroom perimeter in their play, flying airplanes made from Lego all around the room. The boys are also overheard making many non-word noises and sounds.

The girls are much more passive and tend to sit in the same location as they play with the Barbie dolls. Their conversations are much more rule bound and often sound like this, "You get six turns, you get six turns, I get six turns; that's fair," (field notes, December 15, 2008). I believe this type of play would be classified as falling within the realm of communication theory as described by Bateson (1955) and Garvey (1977). The children in this situation are using language during play to clarify and negotiate.

Imaginative play is observed and often takes the form of animals with the children reenacting scenes as cats, dogs, beavers, or tigers. On occasion the imaginative playhouse becomes a veterinary clinic where animals are treated and then released to their owners. Language is interchanged here, and sometimes the students use the word "cat," and other times they use the word "gato." They also use the word "pretend." The kindergarten students in Mrs. Wilson's class are afforded the opportunity to use play to understand language and concepts.

The housekeeping area is used to do 'ironing,' always checking the temperature of the iron before actually ironing and folding each blanket. Often, a stroller comes out, and a baby is placed inside. Then, a short walk around the housekeeping area occurs. As Fromberg (2002) suggests, play is a window through which we can see how children

develop and represent meaning. Observing this type of play enables Mrs. Wilson to build relationships with her students and glean a glimpse into their lives outside of the classroom.

Throughout their playtime, the children observe one another, imitate the action of others, listen, share, take turns, cooperate, practice conflict resolution and negotiating skills, and engage in imaginative and creative activity.

Mrs. Wilson roams the room to see where students have settled in and then goes to her desk to catch up on computer work, paperwork, or one-on-one conversations with students at her desk. On occasion she was called over to help with conflict resolution. She did not directly enter into student play.

Mrs. Wilson consistently alerts students when there are ten more minutes until clean up and five more minutes until clean up. When playtime is ending, Mrs. Wilson rings a bell and requested, "Please help clean our community." Without fail, the students quietly and promptly put the toys and materials away.

At 11:15 a.m. the students gather on the carpet, and Mrs. Wilson shows the students sorting tubs for math. She reminds them of how to treat the materials respectfully. The students pick which math sorting center they want to work at and immediately start sorting the materials. There is no paper/pencil activity involved, just hands-on classifying and ordering of materials. The students continue this activity until clean-up time at 11:30 a.m.

Lunch and recess immediately follow and at 12:25 p.m. the kindergartners return to physical education and media. Stations are completed in physical education, and letter

identification is reviewed in the media center while the children enjoy along a few new books. The kindergartners return to their classroom at 1:25 p.m. for rest. At 1:50 p.m. rest is complete and the students are dismissed for free playtime in the classroom.

Mrs. Wilson (interview notes, November 3, 2008) noted that she has learned much from observing play in kindergarten:

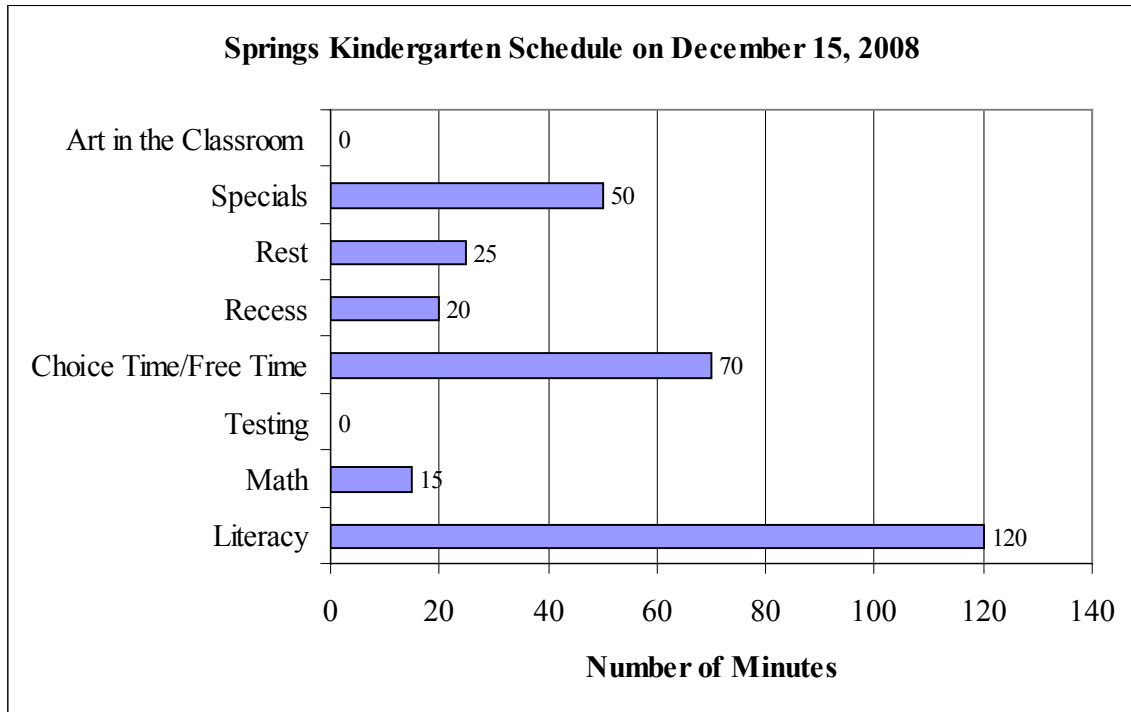
Whether they are outside on the playground and learning how to problem solve, it is crucial, it is crucial for them, it is going to affect them, the play they have now, whether it is outside or inside, is going to affect them for the rest of their school time and life. Often you hear kindergarten teachers just get to put their feet up for the last 45 minutes of the day while the children play — well, it isn't that! That's to me in a lot of respects, that's where they need to be. They need to be playing versus all of this other stuff.

At 2:45 p.m. the class participates in clean up and pack-up and is dismissed at 3:00 p.m.

The following graph represents how time was spent on December 15, 2008, in Mrs. Wilson's classroom.

Figure 5.3.

Time Spent in Springs Elementary Kindergarten: Monday, December 15, 2008



Monday, January 12, 2009. I arrive at 9:30 a.m. due to a snowstorm and slow traffic on the mountain passes. The class is gathered around Mrs. Wilson who is conducting a lesson on word families. The lesson is didactic and difficult; students try their best to follow along. Once the teaching is over the students are excused to complete a worksheet which corresponds with the lesson. The worksheet is from the series *Drops in the Bucket* and is listed as a first grade level workbook. The worksheet incorporates many skills, such as initial consonant sounds, short vowels sounds in the medial position, final consonant sounds, rhyming words, multi-meaning words (homophones), number words (one, two, three), reading comprehension, word endings (-s, -es, -ed, -ing), opposites, and word families. Students turn in their worksheets, and snack begins at 10:00

a.m. As students are enjoying their snack, Mrs. Wilson circulates with the worksheets and talks to each student about his or her work and helps explain the answer if an error is made.

At 10:15 snack has finished, and the students assemble around Mrs. Wilson at her rocking chair. Mrs. Wilson builds background knowledge with the students by asking if they have ever gone sledding. Next, she probes for other words to build the students' vocabulary. She then reads, *The Wild Toboggan Ride* (1994) by Suzan Reid and Eugenie Fernandez. As the story draws to a close, Mrs. Wilson asks the students to return to their tables and write about a sledding experience they have had recently. A parent volunteer has entered the room and helps with writer's workshop.

One child (field notes, January 12, 2009) calls me over to the single desk she has settled into to complete her work. Unsolicited, she shares the following: "Do you know why I work here all the time? Because I talk too much. I can only be at the tables for snack. Then I work at this desk; just like a first grader."

Mrs. Wilson and the parent volunteer prompt students by interjecting comments such as, "You're missing a vowel." "You need a capital letter to start a new thought." "What goes at the end of a sentence?" Writer's workshop ends with many children sharing their entries.

The kindergartners are given playtime within the confines of the classroom at 11:00 a.m. due to the blustery weather. Groups of children can be seen playing with various tubs of materials: Lego, plastic cowboys and Indians, blocks, and teddy bears. As

students interact and play, Mrs. Wilson works one-on-one with a student to finish his journal page.

Two girls interact with each other and a tub of plastic bears. They speak Spanish as they sort the bears by size and color. Once the sorting is complete they make patterns with the groupings: big-little-big-little. Through playful interaction with the objects the girls are able to think through concepts learned (patterns) and apply their own ideas and thinking to new experiences.

Many students seemed to seek movement today and can be observed pushing buckets, skipping in the classroom and crawling to various tubs in the room. Mrs. Wilson slips to her desk to catch up on paperwork and check her computer.

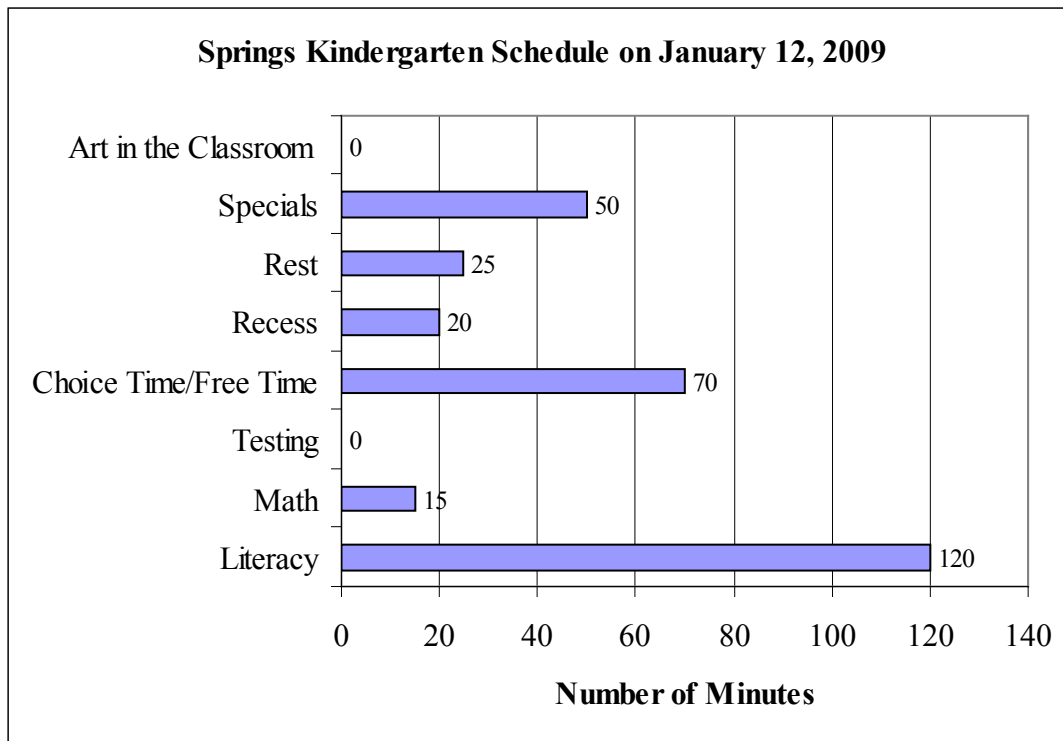
At 11:22 a.m. the students are congregated around the rocking chair. Mrs. Wilson introduces clock work with a huge moveable clock face. She probes to find out what students know about clocks. She asks who can name the parts of a clock and students volunteer: the face, the hands, the hour hand, and the minute hand. She takes her time in explaining about the hour and minute hand and shares that they both have very different jobs to do. Mrs. Wilson (field notes, January 12, 2009) ends the lesson with the following, “Tomorrow, when we come back, I am going to tell you how, nope teach you how, to tell time....don’t miss it!”

At 11:35 a.m. the students bundle up and go to lunch and then recess. A group with students of mixed grades and ages is observed playing a pretend game of *Indiana Jones*. Students return to class at 12:25 p.m. and immediately get ready for physical

education and media. At 1:30 p.m. they return to their classroom for a 25 minute rest time.

At 1:55 p.m. the students awake and engage in free playtime, with the exception of one student who sleeps until Mrs. Wilson wakes him at 2:45 p.m. Candy cane play dough is introduced as an option at playtime. Half a dozen students gather around the back table to play with this option. Some children are creating snowmen from the play dough. Others are making chocolate chip pancakes. Rolling pins are used to flatten the pancakes. Much sharing occurs and comments (field notes, January 12, 2009) like, “Do you want to play? Can I use? Who wants pizza?” are heard. The children start discussing dinosaurs, and what it means to be extinct. The conversation quickly changes to, “Do you know about God? He’s watching us. Santa is watching us too. You know, God is bigger than King Kong.” Students clean up and pack up and are dismissed at 3:00 p.m. Mrs. Wilson touches base with many parents and grandparents. She hugs each child good-bye and also tosses kisses their way. In an effort to see just how time was spent on Monday, January 12, 2009, in Mrs. Wilson’s kindergarten, the following graph was created.

Figure 5.4.
Time Spent in Springs Elementary Kindergarten: Monday, January 12, 2009



Monday, January, 19, 2009. The day begins as all other days with the lunch count, calendar, and estimation jar activities. At 9:13 a.m. the focus shifts to a conversation about Martin Luther King, Jr. Mrs. Wilson introduces the concept and vocabulary word, *segregation*. The students retell a story they heard on Friday, *Happy Birthday, Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Marzollo & Pinkney, 1993). The conversation weaves in respect, leadership, justice, laws, and rules. The students talk about skin color. Mrs. Wilson chimes in and says, “We have African American children at Springs Elementary School, too.” One student replies, “Yes, Jose has black skin!” Mrs. Wilson clarifies, “Yes, Jose has darker skin, but Jose is Hispanic, not African American.”

The conversation continues, and the students talk about the speech “I Have a Dream.” The conversation moves forward and highlights the inauguration of Barack Obama. Mrs. Wilson then makes the connection for the students that they will have the chance to see history in the making by witnessing the inauguration of the first black President on the United States and notes that Martin Luther King, Jr. helped pave the way for this historical happening. Mrs. Wilson provides background information for her students by rereading the book and explaining what the Washington Monument is, and who George Washington was, she further elaborates on Martin Luther King, Jr.’s story and shares with the children, “I believe in what he did---I would have walked behind him.” The students reply, “Me, too...me, too!” (field notes, January 19, 2009)

At 9:30 a.m. the students fan out to various classrooms for language arts instruction. Mrs. Wilson meets with her whole group and teaches a lesson on the blends, ch, sh, th, wh with a teacher-created story and matching pictures of elves. The students are captivated. The students are then given a worksheet to practice the skill of differentiating between the sounds the blends make. The class completes the worksheet together as much of the vocabulary is new to many children: whisk, whale, chicken, whip, and chin.

At 10:00 a.m. students are enjoying their snacks. Pablo (field notes, January 19, 2009) is eating a sandwich of whole wheat bread; he looks closely at his sandwich and then his skin and says aloud, “I’m brown skinned.” Snack lasts for twelve minutes, and as children finish their snacks they clean up their places and look for books to browse and read.

During snack, Mrs. Wilson (field notes, January 19, 2009) comes over to me and states, “The CSAPs are approaching and tension will soon build within the school.” She further elaborated with me the new longevity plan for the district and the employees with a long tenure at Mountain View. Thirty-two employees, district-wide, were tapped to retire by 2012 and receive monetary incentive to do so. Mrs. Wilson (interview notes, November 3, 2008) is contemplating this offer as she feels school isn’t about teaching anymore but about test performance:

It is push down, push down, push down and now I’m teaching a first grade curriculum. Well, I think everyone is being pressured, I think, we talk about this in the teachers’ lounge, the federal government is pressuring our states, we just talked about this the other day, and then, I think, Colorado’s Department of Education is pressuring and looking over our superintendents and making sure they are doing what they need to be doing and getting these districts up to par. Of course, we here in the district are working with the achievement gap and trying to fill that in and then I think the superintendent is telling principals what they need to do and the principals are telling the teachers what they need to do. Then we’re telling the students what they need to do, and I just think it is a fact. I am not sure it is anyone’s fault or anything — it is just the way it is right now. We are trying to teach and help but it is very different now and the federal government and the state government and I think our districts as well still want everything to come up, and we want to meet all these standards and we want to meet all these things, but the teachers are scurrying around carrying this entire load. We are trying to do that, we are trying to do everything, but we are up against a lot of different issues.

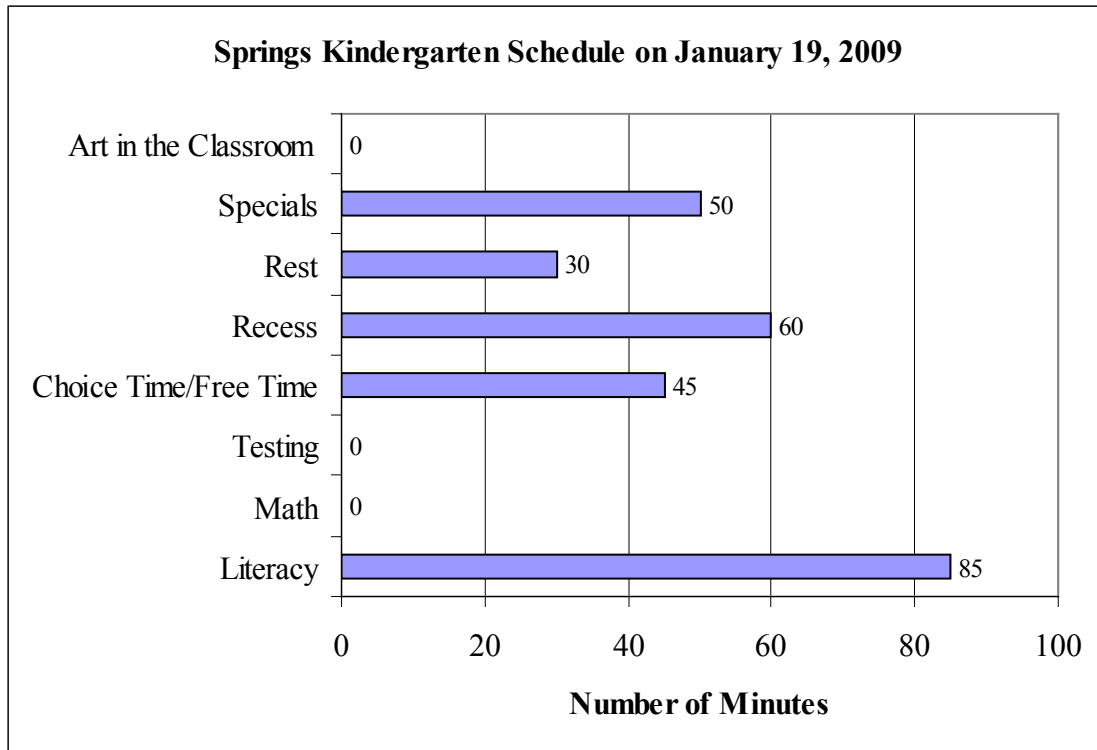
At 10:20 a.m. the students and Mrs. Wilson assemble to sing songs and participate in movement activities. At 10:34 a.m. the students bundle up for outdoor recess. Many students participate in playing *Polar Express* on the playground and try to reenact the story by Chris Van Allsburg (1985) they heard at the end of December. One student is clearly the conductor and moves around the playground chugging and choo-chooing at the top of her lungs. This game continues throughout the entire recess time.

At 11:30 a.m. the kindergartners enjoy lunch and quickly move to the playground. Students are swinging, sliding, and moving across the monkey bars. There is a pretend game of horses and much ball play. A small mound of snow remains on the playground and many students are sliding down it, jumping off it, and rolling down it. There are three teachers on duty. One group of children has found a long strip of ice and fashion it into a game of *Slip and Slide*, taking turns and moving single file down the ice. The whistle blows and recess is over at 12:25 p.m.

Students remove their snow clothes and line up for physical education and media. Promptly at 1:30 p.m. they are back and settling in for rest time. At 2:00 p.m. they begin free playtime in the classroom, and at 2:45 p.m. they clean up and pack up and are dismissed at 3:00 p.m. The following graph demonstrates how time was spent in Mrs. Wilson's kindergarten on Monday, January 19, 2008. In reviewing figures 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5, the majority of time spent in kindergarten was on literacy skills.

Table 5.5.

Time Spent in Springs Elementary Kindergarten: Monday, January 19, 2008



Kindergarten Curriculum at Springs Elementary School

The school day is long at Springs Elementary School. The entire district works on an early release schedule on Mondays to allow teachers time for Professional Learning Communities work. School starts at 8:45 a.m. on Mondays and dismisses at 3:05 p.m. Tuesday through Friday the school day is from 8:45-3:50 p.m. The kindergarten schedule is tight, and many transitions are required for the youngest of learners. The printed kindergarten schedule that was given to me is as follows:

Springs Elementary Kindergarten Schedule

The Monday schedule:

- 8:45-9:00 a.m. Homeroom
- 9:00-9:40 Journal/Circle/Snack
- 9:40-10:30 Literacy Block (switch classes)
- 10:30-10:40 Transition
- 10:40-10:55 Recess
- 11:00-11:30 Math (in homeroom)
- 11:30-11:40 snow clothes
- 11:40-12:20 Lunch
- 12:30- 1:20 Specials (Art, Music, Physical Education, Media)
- 1:20-1:50 Rest and Read
- 1:50-2:30 Handwriting/Science/Social Studies
- 2:30-2:45 Read Aloud
- 2:45-3:00 Pack Up/Review/Dismissal
- 3:05 Dismiss to Gym/Outside

Tuesday through Friday the schedule is as follows:

- 8:45-9:00 Homeroom
- 9:00-9:40 Circle/Journal/Snack
- 9:40-10:30 Literacy Block (switch classes)
- 10:30-10:40 Transition
- 10:40-10:55 Recess
- 11:05-11:45 Math

- 11:50-12:30 Lunch
- 12:30-12:45 Bathroom Break/Story
- 12:50-1:50 Specials (Art, Music, Physical Education, Media)
- 1:50-2:20 Rest and Read
- 2:20-3:10 Handwriting/Science/Social Studies
- 3:10-3:40 Learning Centers
- 3:40-3:50 Pack Up/ Review/ Dismissal
- 3:55 Dismiss to Gym/Outside

The students have physical education three times a week, music twice a week, Spanish twice a week, and an art double class twice a week. The specialists are shared with another school in the district, and therefore, those teachers travel between two schools. The exception is the physical education teacher, Coach Smith. He does not travel and works exclusively at Springs Elementary School.

The district has adopted the use of DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy) to help support comprehensive and coordinated reading goals, assessment, and instruction for all students. Language arts instruction is ability grouped between the three kindergarten classrooms at Springs Elementary School. Mrs. Wilson (interview notes, November 3, 2008) explained:

At Springs Elementary School, we do ability grouping. We have such a high percentage on non-English speaking children but then we also have children who have been to preschool for three to four years who are ready to read. We have children who have *never* been inside the four walls of a school —*never*— they have no background knowledge. They don't speak the language. We have a real melting pot of learners. They are all within my classroom.

Mrs. Wilson uses Lakeshore materials (various games which focus on beginning, medial and ending sounds in words), Zoo Phonics, Little Red Readers from Sundance Publishing, Houghton-Mifflin, Evan-Moor Corporation worksheets and Phonics Fundamentals II worksheets, *Drops in the Bucket* (first grade level book) and a large collection of other emergent reader sets for language arts instruction. Zoo Phonics has had tremendous success with the population at Springs Elementary School. The lessons I observed in language arts were often didactic in nature. The book walks were more open-ended and allowed for students' predictions on what might happen next in the text.

During my time observing language arts for the duration of my research the skills taught or practiced were rhyming words, multi-meaning words (homophones), number words, reading comprehension, word endings, opposites, word families, vowel work (both long and short), and the final *e* rule.

The district has adopted Scott-Foresman Mathematics, but according to Mrs. Wilson, the worksheet type of work does not work so well with the clientele at Springs Elementary School. The kindergarten teachers rely more on activities from Math Their Way. The kindergarten also uses an abacus because of the tangible hands-on type instruction. Mrs. Wilson reports that this works better with the Springs Elementary School population of families.

Parts of the FOSS Science kits are used for science instruction. According to Mrs. Wilson, the second language factor is an issue with the FOSS kits. She feels as though the students just do not have the background knowledge for much of the FOSS science curriculum.

The Social Studies curriculum is evolving as the school is in the beginning stages of IB PYP and has just started writing planners. Mrs. Wilson focuses her work on thematic units: September the class focuses on apples, trees, and families; in October the students learn about harvesting; November involves Pilgrims and Indians and a Thanksgiving Feast; in December the focus is holidays around the world; in January the class learns about winter and seasons, and the communities of the Arctic and Antarctica; in February the class delves into presidents, friendship, and Valentine's Day; the focus for March is water all around and environmental education; in April and May the students learn about bugs and animals and have a culminating trip to the Denver Zoo.

Mrs. Herman reports that Springs Elementary School is supposed to follow a specific kindergarten curriculum and the district ELOs (Essential Learning Outcomes). Mrs. Herman (interview notes, November 3, 2008) also shared that with the "requirements for state testing at third grade, if we don't start with literacy and math in kindergarten, they just aren't going to be ready."

Mrs. Wilson (interview notes, November 3, 2008) made the comment:

I am running a first grade program. They have to know how to read when they leave kindergarten because CSAP is just sitting there, and it is driving, driving, driving, and driving everything! So, they have to be reading, writing in sentences, and they have to be doing the first grade program because first grade is required to do a second grade program and second grade is required to do a third grade program because the next year they are doing CSAP, and so everything is being shoved down.

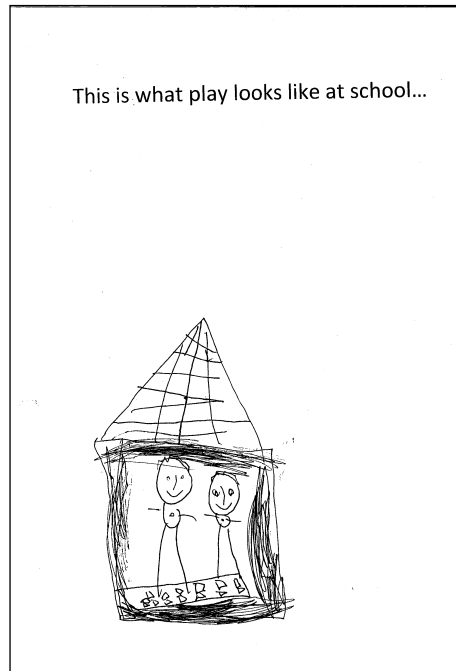
Communication between home and the kindergarten classroom is through weekly newsletters written by Mrs. Wilson. She has a personalized section for each child and writes a quick note home about social and emotional growth observed during the week.

The only homework I saw the students participate in was taking home their reading books from literacy groups. They received a small cloth bag to transport the book to home and back to school the next day.

The Kindergarten Voice at Springs Elementary School

The kindergartners in Mrs. Wilson's class were curious as to why I was in their room and always writing in my notebook. They eagerly came to work with me on January 19, 2008. I wondered how kindergartners themselves reflect upon or view the kinds (and amount) of play in which they engage within the school day. I worked one-on-one with students whose parents had given permission for them to work with me. In turn I asked each kindergartner if I could keep the artwork they created for me (a copy of the work was given to each participant). Following are five examples of the work collected on January 19, 2008.

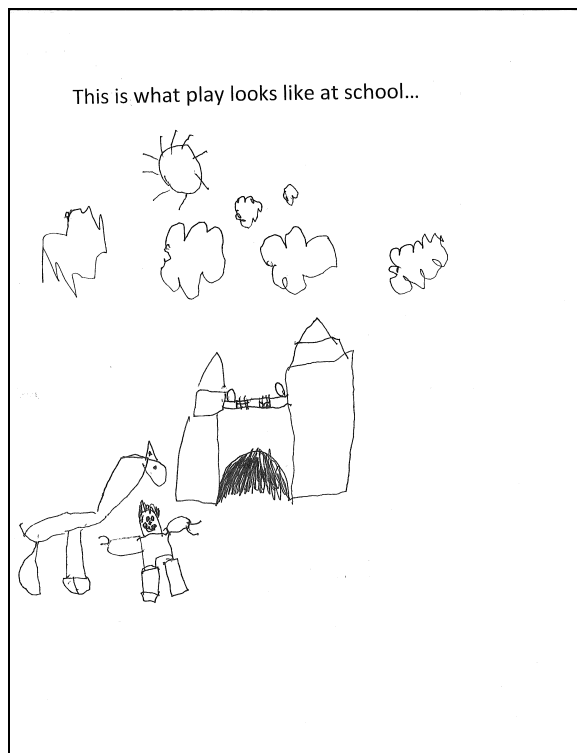
Figure 5.6.
John's Illustration of Play in School



When I posed the question, “What do you do in kindergarten?” to John (field notes, January 19, 2009) he replied, “Is it play with toys or doing really important stuff? In kindergarten we do both.” When I asked him to tell me the difference between really important stuff and play, he elaborated, “For me, really important stuff is math, art, and learning stuff. It is different — play and really important stuff. Learning isn’t the same as playing.” His picture depicts both John and a friend playing with Lego at school. He informed me that, “I play with Lego because it helps my fingers with drawing.” I found John’s comment interesting in that he separated “play” from “learning” or “work” yet made the connection that through play with Lego he was strengthening his fine muscles which in turn helped him with his drawing.

Henry joined me next at the table. He had been playing with a plastic castle structure right before joining me. When asked, “What do you do in school?” Henry (field notes, January 19, 2009) replied, “We learn. Only in kindergarten do you get to play. You cannot play in first grade.” When nudged a bit further he shared, “I play with castles in kindergarten. I play make-believe. I go to the castle, jump in the water — the moat. So do the horses.” I believe Henry’s explanation falls into Elkind’s (2007) category of “mastery play,” constructing and reconstructing concepts and skills. (Henry’s first language is Spanish.)

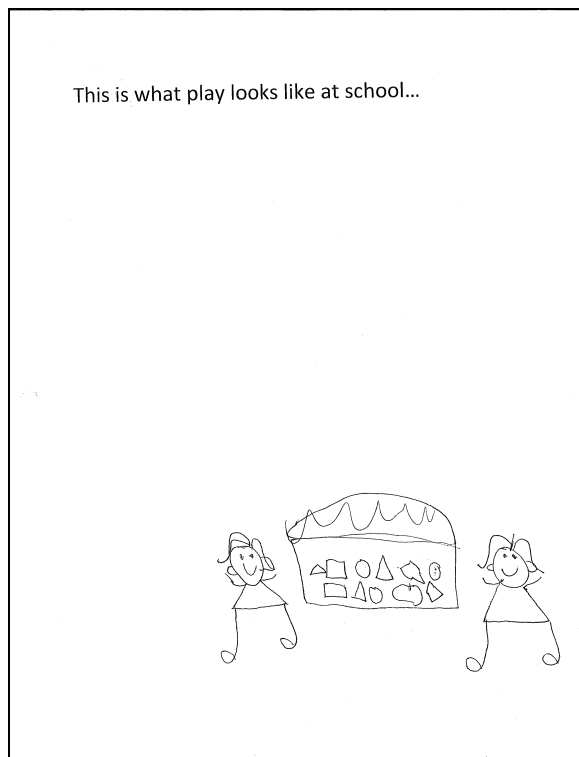
Figure 5.7.
Henry’s Illustration of Play in School



Emma shared that she plays with her friends in kindergarten. Her drawing represents playing with shapes. Emma shared that she plays with shapes because she wants to learn more about shapes. I believe through play Emma was able to understand the various shapes introduced to her by Mrs. Wilson. She used play to further her understanding, learning, and development. She may not have become as skillful at the task of shape identification without this rich play process.

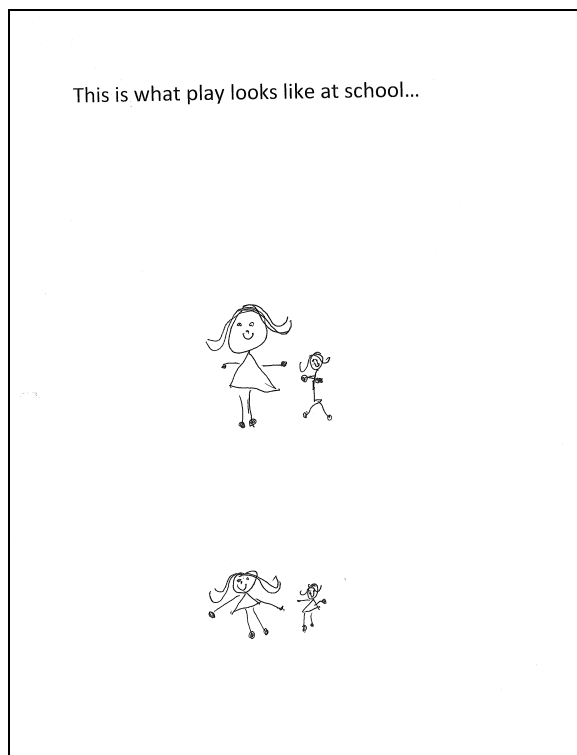
Figure 5.8.

Emma's Illustration of Play in School



Stephanie (field notes, January 19, 2009) commented that in kindergarten, “You learn stuff you don’t know. You eat lunch, sing songs, and play.” When asked, what do you like to play? Stephanie replied, “Tinkerbell. Tinkerbell is make-believe, and I like to play make-believe because it is fun. I play Tinkerbell at home. At school I play Barbie’s, Tinker doesn’t come to school.”

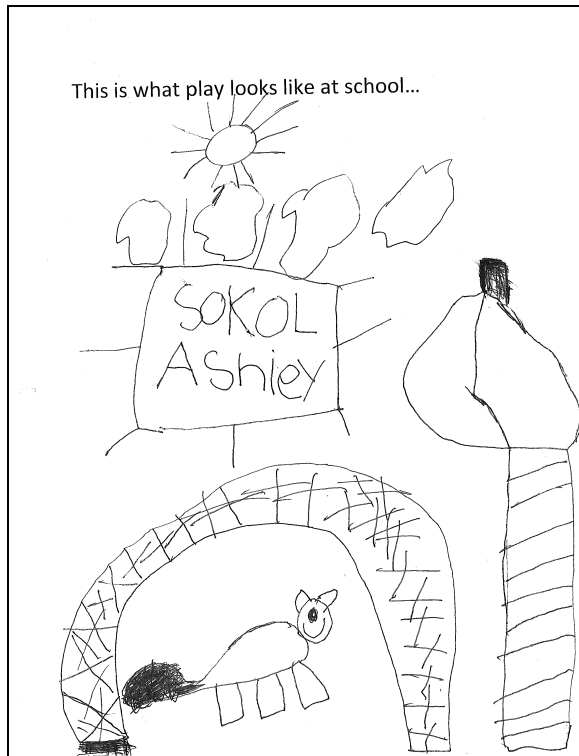
Figure 5.9.
Stephanie’s Illustration of Play in School



Jordan, Kate, and Ellie all came at the same time to work with me. All three had been playing cooperatively in the room. When asked what you do in kindergarten, Kate (field notes, January 19, 2009) chimed in, “We talk about beavers, and we learn about beavers. They have orange teeth.” Ellie (field notes, January 19, 2009) shared, “We play beaver at school. I cannot play it at home because I don’t have a closet. We pretend, we slap our tail to protect ourselves — you know, if a bear or hunter comes.” Jordan (field notes, January 19, 2009) further elaborated, “Beavers hide in their lodge in the winter. Their lodge is so strong and sturdy.” Mrs. Wilson overhears this conversation and later in the day shares with me that she recently read a non-fiction story about beavers. The children were fascinated with the facts learned and at playtime that afternoon (and many subsequent afternoons) created a lodge by opening the back closet door and placing two chairs in front of the door and then covering it with a towel — recreating a lodge and becoming beavers.

I believe these children are demonstrating two of Elkind’s (2007) play categories: “kinship,” where the children engage in the world of peer relations, and “innovative” play, when the child demonstrates mastery of concepts and skills and introduces variations. Just as Elkind describes, the types or categories of play can be interchanged and interwoven, as this example indicates. Jordan, Kate, and Ellie were given time at the end of the day to work through the concepts and vocabulary learned through a story. Engaging in meaningful play provided these three children rich experiences that I believe aided in their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Figure 5.10.
Kate's Illustration of Play at School



Chapter Six: Park Elementary School

It is paradoxical that many educators and parents still differentiate between a time for learning and a time for play without seeing the vital connection between the two.

Leo Buscaglia

In order to provide a vivid and comprehensive picture of Park Elementary School, this chapter is divided into five sections. As in the previous chapter, the following discussion is based upon observation and interview data. Once again, the chapter includes research evaluation of kindergarten settings; I observed at Park from March 2, 2009 to March 5, 2009. My observations were again geared toward understanding how a single teacher navigated her pedagogical obligations within district, school, and personal intentions, goals, and beliefs. The fourth section outlines the kindergarten curriculum at Park Elementary School. The chapter ends with illustrations of how contemporary kindergartners' reflect upon or view the kinds of play in which they engage within the school day.

Professional Learning Community at Park Elementary School

On April 27, 2009, I attended the Professional Learning Community meeting at Park Elementary School. There were 16 faculty members in attendance, 14 female and two male. The principal, Mrs. Ward, opened the meeting with a variety of announcements regarding up coming events, reminders on expectations for meeting behavior (no work on computers), and a few expressions of gratitude to individuals for

their efforts on various committees. The conversation then shifted to the school calendar for 2009-2010 and projected enrollment numbers.

The group observed a PowerPoint presentation from the principal on *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners* (Hill & Flynn, 2006). Mrs. Ward read each slide to the group; the presentation consisted of eleven points from McRel. The group participated in an exchange with dialogue centering on objectives versus activities. The group was then instructed to divide into smaller groups and talk about the points made in the PowerPoint and how they might apply to the work being done at Park Elementary School.

A teacher then led the discussion sharing the insights made from the smaller groups. I later learned that this teacher and Mrs. Ward are the representatives to the district training on *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners*, and in turn, they train the building site faculty. The meeting promptly ended at 5:00 p.m.

Description of Park Elementary School

Park Elementary School is the oldest site in Mountain View School District. The school opened in 1972. The 2008-2009 enrollment data lists 240 students enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade, (Park does not house a preschool on its site.)

Mrs. Ward is in her first year as principal of Park Elementary School and has been in education for thirty-five years. She has been in administration for fifteen years and prior to that taught elementary through middle school. Mrs. Ward (interview notes, November 10, 2008) believes there has been a vast change in kindergarten curriculum over the past five years:

There is a huge difference in kindergarten curriculum now. A lot of expectations for first grade are in kindergarten now. I think it was — in my first years of teaching, it was a great year in kindergarten when everyone could recite the alphabet by the end of the year. Now the expectation is that kindergartners are reading through a pre-primer or primer level by the end of the year. That has been a huge change. I think I have seen a big difference in playtime too. It is a struggle to balance DAP and requirements.

Five percent of the students at Park Elementary School are minorities, and approximately 5 percent speak a language other than English at home. Students qualifying for free or reduced priced lunch comprise 9.4 percent of the student population. This statistic is up slightly from 9.2 percent in 2006-2007 and down from 12.9% in 2005-2006.

The school offers art, music, physical education, opportunities for civic and community engagement, an internet safety program, International Baccalaureate, and before and after school care programs. The school's goals are as follows:

- Goal One: Improve writing achievement
- Goal Two: Students will develop as caring learners, well versed in PYP attitudes and learner profile

Park Elementary School made AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) in both reading and math.

The school's mission aims to create internationally-minded individuals. The school's vision statement is as follows: "Park Elementary School seeks to provide every student with the opportunity to grow academically, incorporate global knowledge in what they learn, and to develop emotionally, socially and physically. We work to create successful learners as well as caring citizens who show respect and responsibility in their community."

The school employs 12 full-time teachers and nine part-time teachers, one librarian, one part-time counselor and one administrator. The school employs four part-time support staff. The school also has two full-time paraprofessionals and six part-time paraprofessionals.

The average years of teaching experience at this site is nine years. Eight employees have a master's or doctoral degree. There are two kindergarten classrooms at Park Elementary School, and I spent my time in Mrs. Robinson's classroom.

Snapshots from the Classroom and School Environment at Park Elementary School

Monday, March 2, 2009. Park Elementary School is located in the middle of a small ski town. The town has two elementary schools, and Park is the older of the two. The school backs up to a park in town; the park is usually occupied with sledders (in the winter) and many dogs, as it is the town's dog park. A parking lot occupies the front of school, and the main doors into the school are clearly marked and welcoming. Upon entering the building I was struck with the amount of art work, supplies, boxes, posters and banners — the presentation was visually overwhelming. There were literally boxes of resources and supplies stacked from floor to ceiling in all nooks and crannies of this school.

The front foyer has two benches, and the office is immediately to the left. There are various flyers in the foyer promoting events at school or in the wider community. The flyers I saw were printed in English. Throughout the school one sees framed photographs of Park students demonstrating IB attitudes. The IB attitudes are important in this school as well as service to others. One morning the students were selling donuts with the

proceeds benefitting a fourth grade trip. Another day the students held a bake sale with the profits going to the Denver Rescue Mission for the homeless. Student's artwork graces the walls throughout the single — floored building.

In many ways, the school resembles a day gone by with an open classroom philosophy. Teachers have tried to create boundaries and have used bookcases to create make-shift walls and doors. The interior of the building is cluttered with resources and supplies.

Throughout my time at Park Elementary School children and adults in the community were happy and treated each other with respect. The school setting provided structure, routine, an outlet for creativity, and opportunities for socialization. The staff was always friendly and courteous.

My first attempt to reach Mrs. Robinson was a maze of sorts as her classroom is tucked in the middle of school, and I must travel a circuitous route in order to find it. Thus situated, Mrs. Robinson's classroom has neither windows nor doors. She has a tall lamp which features two spotlights strategically positioned to give more light in a dimly lit room. I wondered just how this classroom would perform a lock-down if the need even presented itself. In order for Mrs. Robinson's class to exit the building to reach the playground, they must traipse through the middle of the other kindergarten classroom.

Mrs. Robinson's classroom is square in shape and dark without natural light from the windows. My time in this classroom was in early March; one wall featured a Christmas tree decoration, and the other walls contained teacher-made materials from *Secret Stories Cracking the Reading Code* (Garner, 2007).

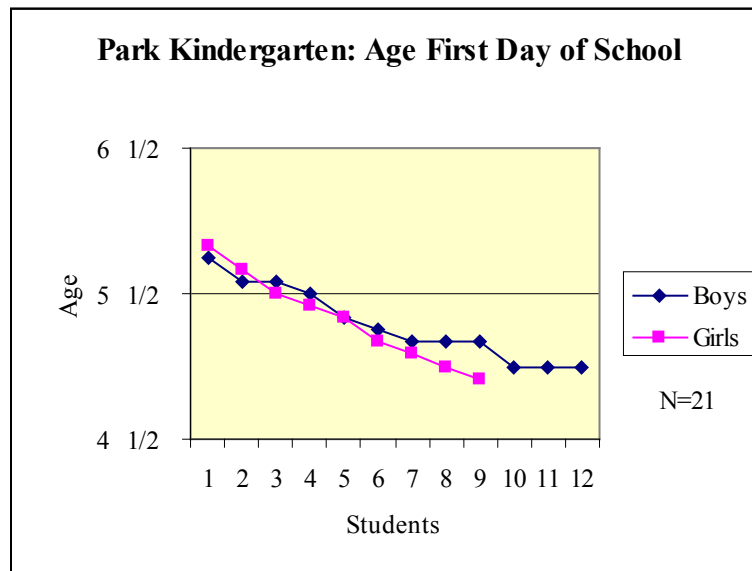
The classroom is bare of student created materials and contains mostly teacher-made products (a kindergarten sight word wall, vowel chart, blends chart and calendar). There is also a bulletin board for IB PYP which has the headings: Central Idea, Inquiry Into, and Wonders. There is another bulletin board which displays the following words: cooperation, respect, creativity, curiosity, independence, confidence, integrity, enthusiasm, and empathy.

There are a few bookcases scattered throughout the room, a computer, a teacher desk, an overhead complete with LCD projector, a sink and built-in water fountain, two wooden structures holding puzzles, unifix cubes, dice, dominoes, rainbow rods, a game of Chutes and Ladders, a Boggle game, Hi Ho Cherry-o game, and an array of coloring sheets. The classroom has buckets of literacy resources, glue sticks, pencils, and disinfectant wipes. The play area is located near the coat rack in the back of the room next to the bathroom. It appears as though this area is not used as many boxes are stored in front of the dramatic play props, dollhouse, plastic ship, and basket of dolls and stuffed animals. There is also a miniature kitchen located in this area complete with a sink, stove, refrigerator, and cupboard. The area occupies a space of about five feet by ten feet and is rectangular in shape. This space also serves as the area where students line up to exit and enter the classroom. A box of blocks is also in this vicinity. This area is separated from the rest of the room with bookcases. Near Mrs. Robinson's desk is a wall of student work: coloring sheets and notes to their teacher.

Mrs. Robinson is a graduate of Park Elementary School and of Mountain View School District; this is her second year of teaching. She has taught kindergarten for both years.

The kindergarten class is comprised of 21 students. The range of ages on August 27, 2008 (the first day of school), were four years and eleven months to five years and ten months. The average age of the kindergarten class on the first day of school was five years and four months; this was true for both the boys and the girls in the class. The average age of the class at Springs Elementary School was also five years and four months old; five years and five months for the boys and five years and two months for the girls. The boys at Park were on average one month younger than the boys at Springs and the girls at Park were on average two months older than the girls at Springs.

Figure 6.1.
Park Kindergarten: Age First Day of School



The school day begins at 8:45 a.m., and the children arrive with snow gear and immediately know where to put their belongings. The class joins Mrs. Robinson around the calendar at the front of the room. The class quickly works through the day of the week, and attendance is taken. At 9:00 a.m. Mrs. Robinson explains that today is the anniversary of Dr. Seuss's 101st birthday. She passes out dot-to-dot sheets for the students to complete. Students are asked to go to one of four round tables to complete their work. Two parent volunteers are in the room to assist Mrs. Robinson. One volunteer works one-on-one with a student while the other volunteer roams the room with Mrs. Robinson. Students are asked to put their head down when they are finished with the task; this alerts the adults in the room to check their work.

As Mrs. Robinson checks in with individual students, she kneels down and gets at the child's level while at the same time creating eye contact with the child. At 9:13 Mrs. Robinson announces to the group, "Please file your work and join me on the carpet." Students quickly gather up their papers and line up single file to file their work into hanging files. Each child has a hanging file marked with his or her name. As students complete this task, the teacher chats with the two volunteers. Three minutes pass and Mrs. Robinson announces, "I need everyone in the circle on the carpet, 10, 9, 8, 7..." She proceeds to countdown to zero. She then notices that table three needs to return to their work area and tidy up.

At 9:16 a.m. a mother volunteer shares her favorite Dr. Seuss book with the group. Mrs. Robinson and the other parent volunteer leave the room for a few minutes. Mrs. Robinson returns and listens to the story.

At 9:20 the students are given a piece of paper in the shape of a Dr. Seuss hat. On the paper the students are asked to create word families with the /at/ sound and the /ate/ sounds. Mrs. Robinson assigns students to tables to complete their work. The students depart and start their assignment. Mrs. Robinson can be heard saying, "I challenge you to use some of our blends" (/fl/at, /sk/ate).

Everyone is on task and working to complete the assignment. Mrs. Robinson roams the room along with the two parent volunteers. Five minutes into the assignment, "Kindergartners, as you finish," Mrs. Robinson announces, "put your head down and someone will check your work and let you color a hat just like the one the Cat in the Hat wears." As heads go down, adults scurry over to children and ask each child to read their words aloud. At 9:35 a.m. a student is chosen to pick a stamp "Great Work" is picked, and Mrs. Robinson asks the students to once again line up to file their papers. This time she glances at the work, places a stamp on it and asks each student to file their papers in the hanging files. This is completed at 9:45 a.m., and the students gather on the carpet in the circle and the other mother volunteer reads her favorite Dr. Seuss book, *Horton Hears a Who*. Because Mrs. Robinson's room is situated between two other classrooms, with no doors, one can hear white noise throughout the day coming from either side of the classroom. This does not seem to faze Mrs. Robinson or the kindergarten students.

At various times throughout the morning students leave the room for 10 to 20 minutes. When I ask Mrs. Robinson about this she replies the students are ability grouped between the two kindergarten classrooms, and that a third teacher also teaches small

group literacy and math lessons. Mrs. Robinson elaborates and shares that the third teacher takes the “outliers” and works with them.

At 9:53 a.m. the mother volunteer finishes *Horton Hears a Who*. Mrs. Robinson asks the students to move to their assigned seats on the carpet. Seven minutes remain until it is time for snack. She asks the students which of two games they would like to play: *Get the Wiggles Out* or *The Shoe Game*. The students enthusiastically shout, “*The Shoe Game!*” Each student takes off one shoe and places that shoe in the middle of the circle. Next, they sit in a circle and stretch out their legs. Mrs. Robinson starts the timer with the direction, “Go.” One child begins the game by picking up a shoe and giving it to the right owner by matching the shoe from the pile with the shoe on the child’s foot. This matching game continues until all children have a pair of shoes on. Mrs. Robinson (field notes, March 2, 2009) announces, “That took 2 minutes and 18 seconds to complete the task. Was that very good? Do you think you can beat it? Put your shoes back in the circle.” The game is repeated. The second game took 1 minute and 44 seconds. “Much better, we beat the first time,” replies Mrs. Robinson.

At 10:00 a.m. the parent volunteers leave, and the students wash their hands for snack. A few children go to the cubby area and retrieve a snack from home; others wait at a table for a snack from the teacher. There are two options: Ritz crackers or Cheerios. Students wait quietly for Mrs. Robinson to pour their choice onto the table. Snack lasts for 15 minutes; during that time the children are quiet and are encouraged to use the bathroom. “Use the restroom now because during art and media you cannot be excused to go,” warns Mrs. Robinson.

It is 10:15 and the class has 15 minutes to spare before going to media. Mrs. Robinson announces, "If anyone is interested I'm reading a pigeon book. Come up if you want to hear it." A handful of children gather around Mrs. Robinson to hear the story. The other children look at books on their own or in pairs throughout the room.

At 10:30 a.m. the students line up to go into the media center. In the media center each student sits in front of a computer and places headphones on. The students are asked to turn on their computers and work on the program that promotes letter recognition and initial sound fluency. The configuration of the room is a horse shoe, and the students' monitors are easily accessed by the teacher, Mrs. Windes. As students finish their games a certificate appears on the screen. The students are asked not to print the certificate but to keep playing the game. The computer game is colorful, quick, and constantly changing with images.

At 10:45 a.m. Mrs. Windes asks, "Had enough? Want to try something else?" She leads them to other options. The students have a choice to make as to which game they will play. Some games focus on eye-hand coordination, some require typing skills, and others necessitate mouse skills (all small motor coordination skills). At 10:58 a.m. Mrs. Windes asks the students to take off their headphones, shut down the computers, and line up for art. At 11:00 a.m. the students are escorted down the hallway in a line to art class.

Students walk down a hallway lined with IB bulletin boards. What are the points of view? (perspective) What is it like? (form) How does it work? (function) What is our responsibility? (responsibility) How is it connected to other things? (connections) How is it changing? (change).

The students arrive at art class shortly after 11:00 a.m. and are greeted at the door by Ms. Wilcox. The instructions for the day are given in the large group. The students are asked to draw something they did over the winter break using the medium of over writer markers. Ms. Wilcox divides her time at Park Elementary School and a neighboring school also in Mountain View School District, (She has over 400 art students).

As students work on their drawings, they converse with one another about the markers and the magical elements they possess. They are eager to see what each over writer does and what color will appear. Ms. Wilcox roams the room and checks in with each student. She is engaging, personal, and displays both warmth and concern for each student. The art room also displays the IB PYP Learner Profile attributes: appreciation, commitment, cooperation, empathy, respect, creativity, tolerance, curiosity, enthusiasm, integrity, independence, and confidence. These attributes are displayed throughout the building at Park Elementary School.

At 11:22 a.m. Ms. Wilcox states, “Three minutes to clean up! You may take your drawings home with you today.” At 11:25 a.m. she says, “Stop, look, listen.” She elaborates on the clean up routine, and the students exit the art room at 11:30.

At 11:32 a.m. the kindergartners are back with Mrs. Robinson and are asked to bring their *Fast Start Folders* to the circle. A group of 10 students leaves the room for instruction with another teacher. Nine children remain in the classroom and are asked to get coloring sheets and to color quietly at their tables. As students are coloring, Mrs. Robinson invites Josh to her table in the back of the room and assesses his ability to read nonsense words (timed and out of context). At 11:40 a.m. another group is excused to go

to “enrichment.” Mrs. Robinson continues to work one-on-one with Josh. He receives a small book, *My Room*, and works on the task of a picture walk through the book with Mrs. Robinson guiding the activity.

He is asked to read the book next, sounding out words as he goes through the pages. Other students approach Mrs. Robinson with questions and her reply is, “No, I am working with Josh now.” At 11:43 a.m. Josh has finished reading the book; Mrs. Robinson collects the book from him, excuses him from the table, and writes notes about his performance in a notebook. Josh takes a color sheet and joins a small group of children to color. Another child is invited to work with Mrs. Robinson one-on-one. This continues with three more students. Mrs. Robinson assesses five students individually in fifteen minutes. She uses Ready Readers from Modern Curriculum Press, *Secret Stories*: a teacher created curriculum, Fast Start for Scholastic, and various small Houghton-Mifflin readers. Park uses the Zoo Phonics program for handwriting practice. The kindergarten uses *Secret Stories* for phonics instruction. Mrs. Robinson stated that, “*Secret Stories* (Garner, 2007) works better with this population.”

At 11:55 a.m. all students have returned to class and are standing behind their chairs at their tables, ready to be dismissed for lunch. At noon the group is walking toward the lunchroom.

Kindergartners eat lunch in 20 minutes and then head for the playground. They have twenty minutes to play outside before the whistle signals them in at 12:40 p.m. The playground is huge. It is completely fenced in and displays a wide array of playground equipment. Monkey bars, slides, swings, picnic tables, climbing apparatus,

tire swings, and a large hill of snow. The two teachers who had lunch duty are outside for recess duty too. The sun has made a debut, the snow has started to melt, and there are puddles everywhere on the playground. Many children huddle together to float ice chunks on the water. Small groups are playing together, and some children choose to play solo. Only English is heard being spoken on the playground. There are no balls on the playground, and children can be observed climbing up small snow hills and rolling, running, swinging, and jumping. Children move about the entire perimeter of the playground and can be seen switching activities often. I believe this is an example of Berlyne's (1969) theory of arousal modulation — switching activity to gain new ideas and insights, to attempt risky behaviors, or to retreat from too much stimulation.

Eight boys are observed on the field making snowballs by pushing, rolling and throwing. A group of five girls is playing *Follow the Leader* on the picnic tables. Most groups of children are gender specific. A third teacher comes on duty and begins monitoring the playground for safety. There is minimal interaction between teachers and students.

Mrs. Robinson greets her students in line (she has not had recess duty) and escorts them to the other kindergarten classroom for a story and song at 12:40. Both classes merge at this time and Mrs. Brown, the other kindergarten teacher, reads and sings with all kindergartners until 1:20 p.m. Mrs. Robinson is not in the room at this time.

The students listen to a story about a leprechaun and then learn a song, "I'm a Little Leprechaun" to the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot." The students are captivated by the thought of catching leprechauns and eagerly talk among themselves about ways to

actually catch leprechauns. The entire interaction is rich with vocabulary, including words and concepts such as toadstool, dungarees, mushroom, and shamrock and “*being green.*”

At 1:20 p.m. Mrs. Robinson appears and asks her students to join her on the carpet in their classroom. As the students settle in, Mrs. Robinson asks them to think about what they did over the break and then write it down. She shares the expectation of two sentences and to do your very best on this assignment. Students go to the various tables in the room and start writing; this is their third paper/pencil activity of the day. Mrs. Robinson works with a small group at the back table. There are resources for the children to use to check letter formation or sounds (many look to the word wall for accurate spelling). Inventive spelling is encouraged by Mrs. Robinson and some students have used two or more pieces of paper to write about their experiences. Mrs. Robinson reminds the students to use two finger spacing when writing and to go back and check for periods and capitals.

At 1:35 p.m. the five-minute warning is issued, and students are asked to shift to illustrating their work. At 1:45 p.m. writing is over. Students are asked to line up and get their coats for afternoon recess. Mrs. Robinson’s class walks through the other kindergarten class, mid-stream in a lesson, to get to the playground.

The playground is a hub of activity at recess. There is much conversation about leprechauns. One student has a map in her hands that she made to direct her to the location to actually catch a leprechaun. She shouts out to her peers, “It says go west!” A few other children decide to look for four-leaf clovers and try digging under two feet of

snow to find them! I believe the hunt for leprechauns is an example of Vygotsky's theory on play — using symbolic play to organize meaning in language and thought.

The sun has melted more snow, and the puddles have grown into a stream that runs through the playground. The students use the stream as a river and decide to see if their ball will float down stream. They pose questions to each other as to where the ball will end up. They set the ball down, watch it float downstream and then chase after it. When it comes to a stop, one boy kicks it away. They repeat this activity for about twenty minutes. They name the game, *Follow the Water*.

The students are in constant motion during this recess. More imaginative play is observed from dinosaurs to storm troopers. At 2:15 the whistle blows, and students line up to go back inside.

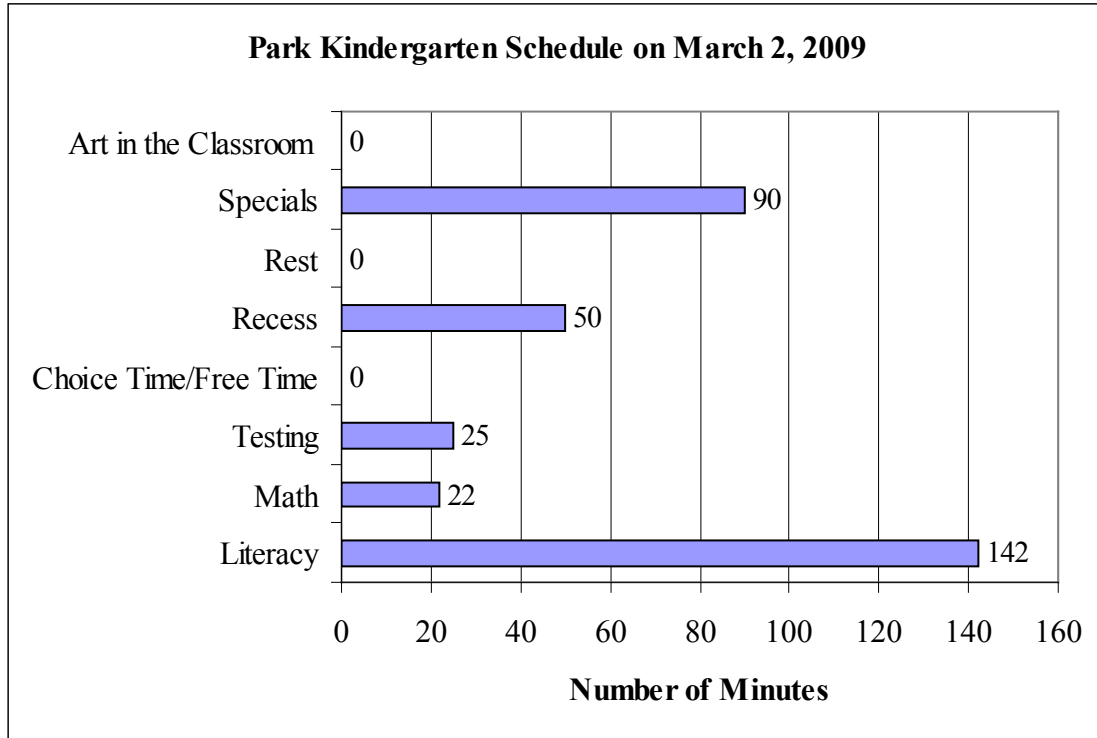
Once coats are off and hung on hooks in the cubbies, students' line up for music. They are early and have a few minutes to play a game before going into the music room. Mrs. Robinson uses the time to have students spell words: was, at, the — their high-frequency words. At 2:25 p.m. the students enter the music room. Mrs. Fox is the music teacher, and she wholeheartedly greets each student and welcomes each boy and girl into the music room. The room is tidy and organized, and it is also filled with resources and supplies. Pictures of various composers are hung throughout the room. Mrs. Fox is enthusiastic and organized.

The class begins with a "Hello" song followed by a movement game. The class works on points accumulated to "earn" game day. Mrs. Fox counts the points, and sure enough, this class has "earned" game day in music. Students make suggestions on which

game to play: *Freeze Dance*, *Adventure to Space*, *Tempo Tag*, *Engine*, *Engine #9*, *A Tisket a Tasket*, *Mexican Hat Dance*, or *Tidy-Oh*. The students advocate for a vote. *Tempo Tag* is the winner. Mrs. Fox reviews the rules for the game. The game is age appropriate, reinforces the skills taught in class, and is engaging for all students. At 2:50 p.m. the game ends and it is time to line up and go back to the kindergarten classroom. A song is sung by all to indicate that music class is over and it is time to line up. At 2:55 p.m. the class is back in their room. A different parent volunteer is in the room cleaning the tables with disinfectant wipes. The students are asked to pack up, it is a Monday and early dismissal is at, 3:00 p.m. Students retrieve their backpacks and coats and then line up in single file in front of the hanging file. Mrs. Robinson inserts the papers from the hanging file of the day into individual folders, and students insert the folders into their backpacks. Two lines form: students taking the bus home and students walking home. Mrs. Robinson and the students exit the classroom to their destinations.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, as a researcher, I knew what I had seen throughout the day at Park Elementary but needed to visualize just how time was spent in kindergarten. In reviewing my notes, disciplines emerged, I then assigned time to each discipline observed. The following graph illustrates just how time was spent in Park Elementary School in Mrs. Robinson's class on Monday, March 2, 2009.

Figure 6.2.
Time Spent in Park Elementary School: Monday, March 2, 2009



Tuesday, March 3, 2009. The bells rings at 8:40 a.m., and students bustle into the kindergarten classroom. Mrs. Robinson takes attendance using her laptop and also enters the lunch count into the computer. The class then plays a quick game of *Hangman* to determine which student will be the student helper for the day. The name Paul is guessed through the *Hangman* game, and Paul helps with the calendar. Students work through: What day of the week is it? Yesterday was _____. Tomorrow will be _____. Paul is asked what his favorite day of the week is. He responds, “Saturday.” Paul then figures out how many days the students have been in school, 114 days. Mrs. Robinson compliments him with, “You’re so smart.” The students then skip

count by 2s to 20. Mrs. Robinson shares, “That wasn’t too good. Let’s do it again, louder and better.” The students repeat the exercise and skip count by 2s to 20. Next they are asked to skip count by 5s to 20.

After this math warm-up Mrs. Robinson shares that they are going to work on something new in math today. She draws a large clock on the white board and asks the students to help her figure out where the numbers go. She starts with, “What’s the biggest number on the clock?” She adds a twelve. “What number is on the bottom?” She adds a six. She then asks, “What numbers go on the sides?” She adds the three and the nine. She reviews the hands on a clock face: hour and minute. She then tries to use her body to show 9:00. Students are asked to imitate her. Next, the students are divided into pairs and are asked to show their partner a time and have the partner guess the time. This proves difficult as a child might portray 3:00 but his or her partner sees 9:00. A student acts up, and Mrs. Robinson escorts him out of the classroom and asks the other students to keep playing the game. She returns a few minutes later and requests the students to cease and find their assigned seats on the carpet. She proceeds to pass out a worksheet on clocks.

The worksheet shows images of clocks, but the time is missing on the clock face. Students are expected to add the correct time after looking at the clocks, 3:00, 7:00, etc. Students are dismissed from the carpet at 9:10 to tables to work independently. As students work at their tables, Mrs. Robinson travels the room and checks in with students. She shares her expectations with the group, “You are responsible for correct facing numbers. Make sure your numbers are going the right way. When you finish, put your head down.” Soon, too many heads are down on the table for Mrs. Robinson to get to

each individual. Instead, she withdraws the direction, asks for heads up, goes to the board, writes the answers for each clock, and asks students to correct their own work.

The students proceed to give themselves a pat on the back for completing side one. The students are instructed to turn their papers over and look at the board. Mrs. Robinson continues and shows students what is required of them on this side, except she does the work for them by writing all the answers on the board: one o'clock all the way to ten o'clock. For the next five minutes much writing, copying, filling in the blanks, and looking at the board and back to the paper occurs. A student comes to 11:00 o'clock and asks how to spell eleven. Mrs. Robinson chimes in, "We haven't learned that word; just write the number 11." Another student is still at 2:00 o'clock and asks how to spell two. Mrs. Robinson explains, "It is a sight word for kindergartners, not to or too but two." A few more minutes pass and then Mrs. Robinson announces, "You should be able to do this at home now." At 9:25 a.m. students are asked to file their worksheet in the hanging file and join Mrs. Robinson at the carpet.

At 9:30 a.m. all are gathered on the carpet, Mrs. Robinson shares that literacy is going to look different today because the copier is broken, and instead of more work sheets, the class is going to play *Bingo*. A paraprofessional enters the room and is assigned the task of playing *Bingo* while Mrs. Robinson works with small groups on reading skills. This isn't initial sound *Bingo* or letter identification *Bingo*, but sight word *Bingo*. Some of the sight words include one, about, the, same, has, of, out, it, would, much, was, then, no, make, and which. Students are eager to play and help each other find the words on their cards. A student exits the room for one-on-one instruction with

another teacher. The paraprofessional comfortably plays *Bingo* with a large group as Mrs. Robinson calls different reading groups to the back table.

As small groups filter back and forth to the back table, each group is reminded that they need to practice their reading fluency. Each group does a picture walk with a different text and then is required to choral read the text. Mrs. Robinson interjects questions such as, “Who are the characters in this book?” “What do you think might happen next?” “Which two words rhyme in that sentence?” Mrs. Robinson asks all the questions and the activity is didactic in nature. As each group finishes, Mrs. Robinson collects the books. They stay in the classroom and do not go home for further practice.

Mrs. Robinson works through one group and then starts with another group. The story the children are exposed to is about fishing, and the questions posed to them are all recall such as, “What did he need to go fishing?”

Mrs. Robinson has time for one more group. This group focuses on a book about a party hat. They too go on a picture walk and are asked literal, basic comprehension questions. At 10:08 a.m. the reading group disbands and the *Bingo* players clean up their game. Students wash their hands and sit down for snack. Today’s choices are pretzels or Cheerios. The room is hushed as students enjoy their snack and use the restroom before heading out to play. A parent volunteer arrives and is handed a stack of papers to try to copy if the copier is fixed. At 10:20 a.m. the students line up for recess.

It is another warm day in the central Rocky Mountains. Three boys gather and decide to kick ice — it is so slushy it is easily moveable. They spend time kicking the ice all over the playground. One states, “Let’s make the ground nice and clean.” They begin

to uncover a circle painted on the blacktop that has been hidden by snow all winter. Once the circle is uncovered they begin to walk on the line and walk in circles for a few minutes. "I'm glad we have our boots on, we don't want our shoes wet," replies another boy in the group. The third child responds, "Hey, we all have on jeans and boots!" Their interest wanes, and they move to the basketball hoop and throw chunks of ice as if to make baskets.

Their conversation meanders and they start talking about avalanches. This conversation was spurred on by a loud noise that the boys interpreted as blasting for avalanches when in actuality it was the sound of earthmovers a few blocks over removing and moving snow from the town's streets.

The sound of laughter can be heard throughout the playground amidst the watery sounds of splashing water and wet snow. The playground is shared with a grandmother and her toddler granddaughter as well as a babysitter and an infant. There is no interaction between the visitors and the students or the teachers.

A third teacher and her class join the kindergarten classes. She immediately disciplines a group for being in the water, and they must line up against a wall for five minutes for the infraction. A fourth teacher and class enter the playground.

The teachers on duty spend the majority of the recess talking with each other. There is no interaction in play with the students from the teachers. Mrs. Robinson (interview notes, March 2, 2009) shared with me that, "I don't problem solve for children." She elaborates on her philosophy,

From an educational base of inquiry, I want them to be in charge of what they do and how they do it. So if they are interested in something, go for it. If not, that is okay too. I am not going to push you into anything. I do cooperative learning because that gives the children the chance to interact. At recess, to help them develop the skills that they need to coexist and work together. I don't solve problems for them. If they have a problem with a peer, they have three solutions:

- They can talk it out,
- They can walk away,
- Or they can ignore it.

They pick which strategy they feel will help them in the situation. The only time I will step in to solve a conflict is if someone gets hurt or if someone hits, kicks, or bites. You name it, we have it. If they try all the solutions and it is still not working, I help them.

At 11:00 a.m. the kindergarten lines up and returns to the classroom.

The students gather at the circle in the front of the room, with the exception of four students who exit the room for a math lesson with another teacher. Mrs. Robinson hands out a worksheet to the remaining group. This activity is a word search of words associated with Dr. Seuss: GRINCH, LORAX, SNEETCHES, HORTON, etc. Mrs. Robinson hands out a sheet to each child and explains how a word search works: look across and down for the hidden words. She demonstrates and shows the students where three hidden words are located. All but three students begin the work. The group of three gather up their math books and proceed to leave the room to work elsewhere and with another teacher. Mrs. Robinson roams the room and checks in with each student. She shares her strategies for finding words but the students aren't afforded the opportunity to share their thinking or strategies. "Kindergartners make sure your name is on your paper," states Mrs. Robinson.

At 11:10 a.m. the four students who left at 11:00 a.m. return and join Mrs. Robinson at the circle. She repeats the directions for the word search. They depart for the tables to complete their assignment. The first group is beginning to finish, and Mrs. Robinson shares that they can start coloring their pictures. This activity requires paper and pencil tasks, visual memory and visual sequencing. At 11:16 a.m. the students become quite wiggly. Mrs. Robinson announces to the group that they can file their papers and then have quiet choice time. The choices offered are teacher supplied coloring sheets or empty toilet paper rolls and scissor work. Fifteen children choose the coloring activity while two cut their rolls to resemble a crown or a telescope.

As students are working with one of the two choices, Mrs. Robinson calls them to join her at the back table for assessment work. She spends between five and ten minutes per individual and works with four students until 11:30 a.m. At 11:30 a.m. two teachers come to Mrs. Robinson's room and ask for small groups of children to join them for literacy instruction in another part of the building. The morning classroom work has been devoted to pencil/paper seatwork with little creativity or imagination on the part of the students. At 11:40 a.m. a parent volunteers arrives, and Mrs. Robinson invites a child to work with the volunteer on reading sight words.

I am struck by the amount of parent volunteers who come throughout the day. Mrs. Robinson shares that she has eight regular parent volunteers weekly. She trains them at the beginning of the year.

At 11:46 a.m. Mrs. Robinson states, "It is too loud. Please whisper. If not, you'll sit out with your head down." One child has completed all the coloring sheets she cares to

attempt and quietly heads for a small rocking chair and looks at books from the bookshelf. Another child has finished his coloring and retrieves a toilet paper roll and scissors and starts making “Indian spears.” He colors the roll and talks to himself as he works, “The colors tell what team they are on.”

At 11:50 a.m. a child returns with a literacy teacher, and she explains to Mrs. Robinson what skill they worked on. At 11:55 a.m. the students clean up and get ready for lunch and recess. The day is warm and sunny, and the river on the playground has grown. Three boys decide to make a dam for the waterway and try to divert the water to other directions. They start investigating the depth of the water, kicking the chunks away and placing their hands into the water. Before you know it, a group of 15 has started in with the water play. All are working cooperatively to build dams.

No organized ball play is observed at this recess. The tire swings are completely occupied by girls swinging and twisting. The swings are occupied by both girls and boys. The tether ball game and monkey bars are at capacity. A small group of kindergartners is playing *Bumblebees*, a form of tag. I believe this game captures Elkind’s (2007) “innovative” play as it demonstrates children introducing a variation of a known game.

Another group is playing *Freeze Tag* (same game, different name from the game played in music class the day before). Two teachers are on duty and spend the recess chatting with each other until a child needs help with a bloody nose. At 12:45 p.m. the whistle blows, and the students line up.

At 12:47 p.m. both kindergarten classes resume in Mrs. Robinson’s class. Later I learn that Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Brown trade off daily for this block of time. Mrs.

Robinson proceeds to read a book about sea turtles to the group. She shared that she picked this book because the next unit in the IB PYP programme is on the ocean. Before reading the book she engages the students to make a prediction about the life span of a sea turtle. The responses vary from 10days to a year. Mrs. Robinson shares that they can live for 30-40 years. The students hold on to each word in the book. The next story she reads is *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (1971). A discussion ensues about the theme or message of the book, what is Dr. Seuss trying to teach us? The prevailing theme decided on by the group was *respect* and *think in the moment*. At 1:20 p.m. the other kindergarten departs for their classroom.

At 1:22 p.m. a parent volunteer arrives, and students are asked to get ready for writing. Mrs. Robinson continues with a review of the previous PYP planner, Expressions. She poses the following question to the students, “How do we show feelings?” The students respond with by our faces, by dancing and movement, through coloring and art, and by writing and words.

The emotion Mrs. Robinson conveys to the students is nervous. She asks them to remember the first day of school and then proceeds to share that “you probably felt scared, shy, and had no confidence.” The students have been sitting for quite some time and start laying down on the carpet and losing interest. Mrs. Robinson senses this and gives the directions, “Please write two sentences about when you were nervous about something.” She passes out paper to each child and assigns each girl and boy to a table. She plays quiet music in the background and asks the students to start working. A second

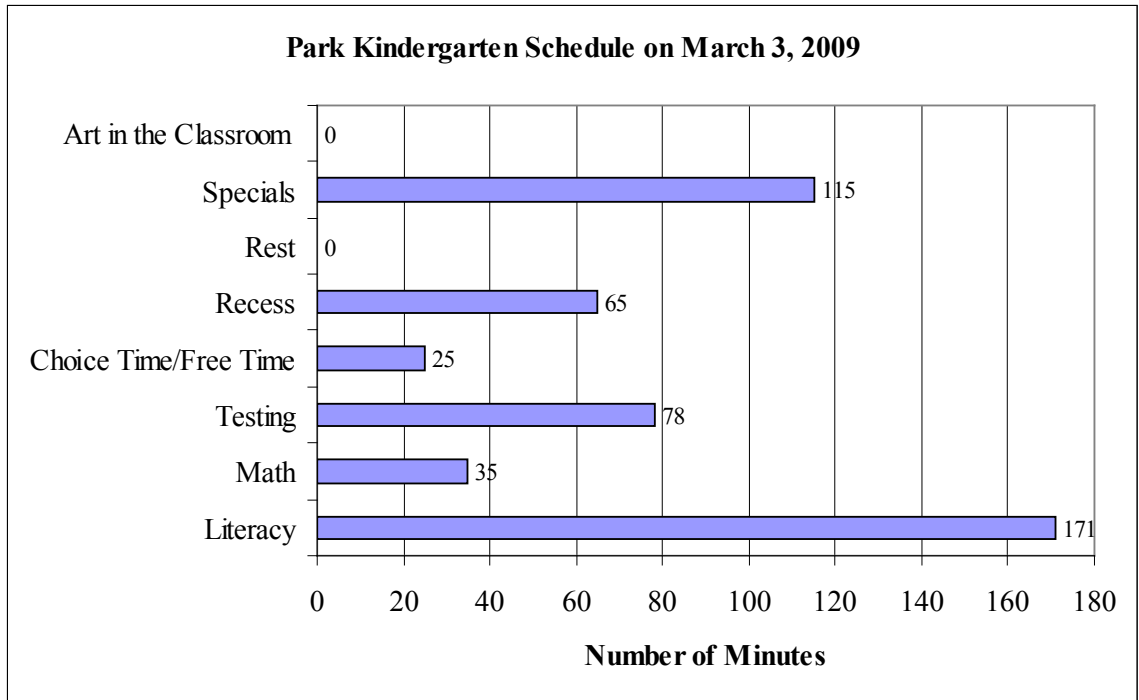
parent volunteer enters the room. The three adults roam the room and check in with individual students.

Students are sounding out words and sharing their stories with peers. Mrs. Robinson reminds the students to check for punctuation and the proper formation of letters (no backwards letters). When done the students are asked to put their heads down on the table to alert an adult who will then give permission to illustrate their work. At 1:55 p.m. the students are paired to share their writing with a peer, once the sharing is over the students are instructed to file their writing in their individual folders.

At 2:00 p.m. the students have stacked their chairs and have started to clean up the room. Their afternoon is filled with specials: Spanish, art, and then music.

At 3:55 p.m. they are dismissed for the day. Again, curious as to how time is spent in kindergarten, the following graph demonstrates how kindergartners spent their time on Tuesday, March 3, 2009, in Mrs. Robinson's classroom.

Table 6.3.
Time Spent in Park Elementary Kindergarten: Tuesday, March 3, 2009



Wednesday, March 4, 2009. The school day begins promptly at 8:45 a.m. with a game of *Hangman* to figure out who the student helper is for the day. The students quickly spell Todd. He is beaming with the anticipation of the responsibility bestowed on him. A parent volunteer enters the room with a baby. The students start with clock review from the day before. They are given a worksheet from *Home Learning Tools* marked grade one. Mrs. Robinson shares with me that most of the math work is downloaded from various sites on the internet. She continues with the directions on the sheet: writing the hour (i.e. 3:00). This explanation and practice is done solely through worksheets; no manipulative is given to the students to investigate or move around. The back side of the worksheet demonstrates an analog clock and children are asked to match the time on the

clock with the written version. The students are dismissed to complete this worksheet at tables. The parent volunteer wanders the room and checks in when students have questions.

Mrs. Robinson calls a group of four to the back table to work with her. These four children do the time worksheet together with Mrs. Robinson. At 9:05 a.m. another parent volunteer enters the room and is give a stack of papers to photocopy. At 9:07 a.m. Mrs. Robinson asks her small group for their papers, collects them, and then proceeds to work with this group on further math work. The students are required to play a memory game of sorts. The group has flashcards with the numbers one to ten written individually on a card. They are also given addition facts which add to the numbers on the first deck of cards: $2 + 7$ needs to be matched with nine. Students are immediately at the symbolic level of math and again no manipulative is offered for counting: knowing the facts is required. The students take turns with the game and encourage each other to make a match. At 9:20 a.m. the game is cleaned up and all students are asked to gather on the carpet in the front of the room.

At 9:21 a.m. new worksheets are distributed, *Drops in the Bucket* worksheets, which are focused on vowel sounds. Students are required to place the correct vowel in the medial position of the word (s _ n — requires a /u/ to be inserted). Mrs. Robinson states that when these are completed students may cut out white strips to place on red paper shaped as a Dr. Seuss hat. Students are dismissed, and two parent volunteers engage with students individually on their assignments.

At 9:25 a.m. Mrs. Robinson calls a small literacy group to the back table. The students are asked to work on their fluency. The group attempts this focus by individually reading aloud their text. Once they have read the book aloud they are asked to close their book. “What was your favorite part of the story?” the students are asked. Following their individual answers they are then asked, “If you could add another page, what would you write about?” The children share their ideas individually. The books are collected, and they are promised a new book tomorrow. They are excused at 9:34 a.m. Another group is invited back, and the scenario is repeated. At 9:52 a.m. a third group is invited back. They too are asked to work on fluency. A fourth group works with Mrs. Robinson, and they also practice their fluency. This group is then afforded the opportunity to work with magnetic letters. They are asked to spell a series of nonsense words, such as, rof, daj, mez, sut, and nil. Then they are asked to spell the real words: rode, gate, and pile using the magic *e* rule. The students work diligently to sound out across the word.

At 10:00 a.m., the students are asked to file their worksheets and wash their hands for snack. Mrs. Robinson distributes either Cheerios or pretzels. Three boys can be heard planning for recess. They are trying to decide if they should play Spiderman or Superman at recess. They are negotiating who should play which role in the game.

At 10:20 a.m., the children are on the playground. A group of five is playing *Princess Pup* and again their conversation focuses on negotiation as to who will play what role. During the game a child shares, “I want to change characters!” and does so with ease. I believe this is an example of communication theory — allowing the child to

move in and out of many roles (reminiscent of Montessori's beliefs and also grounded in the classical theory of practice or pre-exercise theory of play).

The three boys who were discussing either to play *Spiderman* or *Superman* are running around a play structure that consists of a slide, steps, and an enclosed area. They can be overheard saying things like, "Kill me, he's an evil dude. I'll get him." A teacher walks over and reprimands one of three for going up instead of down the slide, and the game abruptly ends.

Another group is involved in a game of tag. One child (field notes, March 4, 2009) gives the directions of the game to the others. "Take turns because you are twins." "I'm the Mom. Follow me, babies." Other children in the game can be overheard saying, "I'm the big sister." "I'm the little sister!" A game of chase ensues, and roles change through this play scene. The leader of this game is very vocal and uses much language throughout the play. She readily shouts out to the other children, "Come on, babies, I found a nice home. Line up. Let's go in. Oh, no, now we are lost. Come on, little one, this is an escape door. Go in, baby Sally. Oh, good the babies are safe from the catcher." Is this an illustration of therapeutic play? The leader of this game, I learn later in the day, is a new big sister. Was this play cathartic for her? By providing time to play at recess, Mrs. Robinson has made possible the opportunity for the students in her class to work through complex feelings and emotions.

At 10:50 a.m., the whistle blows, and the students line up. The students are back in the classroom at 10:55 a.m. and are given the task to write about anything they desire during the writer's workshop block. As students work individually at their tables, Mrs.

Robinson calls a small group to the back table. “You’re almost first graders now. What advice would you give incoming kindergartners?” “Respect the teacher.” “Say thank-you,” are a few of the responses. Mrs. Robinson gives each child a piece of special paper to write their advice. She reminds them to do their best work as this will become a class book. Quiet music is played in the background, and students are actively participating in their assignments.

At 11:05 a.m. a child exits the room to go to speech therapy. The class continues to work and help each other with sounding out words and sharing their ideas. “If you finish early, I have a Dr. Seuss maze sheet for you to complete.” Once students have finished their writing and maze sheets they file them in their folders. At 11:50 a.m. a group exits the room for *enrichment*. At noon all students file into the lunchroom for lunch, followed by recess. The lunchroom is filled quickly, and many parent volunteers sit with their children and help other children with their lunches. A huge sheet cake is displayed in a prominent location in the lunchroom; it is a Dr. Seuss birthday cake. Each child is given a piece to enjoy with their lunch.

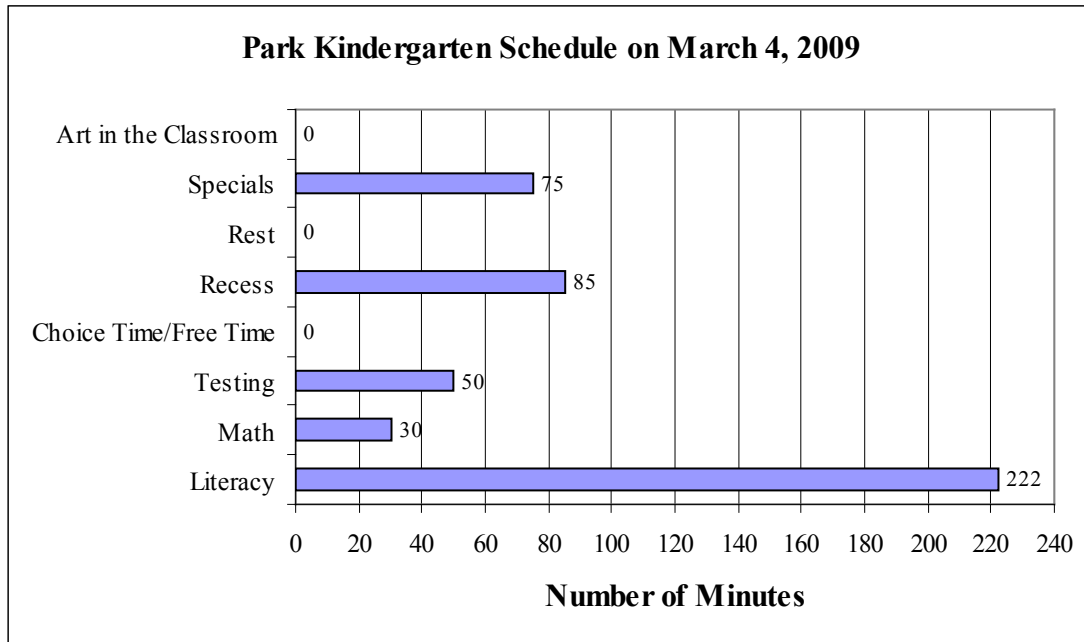
At 12:15 p.m. all have been dismissed for the playground. Imaginative play, use of the swings and tire swings, running, chasing, and playing in puddles is observed. A small group of children are jumping off snow banks, falling, and tumbling and then repeating the same pattern of motion for ten minutes.

The river has captivated many students. Today they continue to try to build dams and now have tried to incorporate the option of building bridges. At 12:45 p.m. the whistle blows and students run to line up.

The entire kindergarten gathers in Mrs. Brown's kindergarten classroom. A grandmother volunteer greets the students and proceeds to read, *Yertle the Turtle* by Dr. Seuss (1958) to the group. Mrs. Robinson comes for her students at 1:20 p.m. She gathers her students on the carpet and poses the following to them: "What is your favorite book by Dr. Seuss, and why is it your favorite Dr. Seuss book?" The students are dismissed to write their answer, and both a parent volunteer and Mrs. Robinson are readily available to help. At 1:53 p.m. all papers are collected and students are asked to pack up for the day. Much conversation centers on what to play at recess.

At 2:05 p.m. both kindergarten classes are on the playground with a variety of other grade levels for afternoon recess. The apparatus is fully occupied and groups of children are running, playing chase, climbing up poles, and playing with various balls (basketball, footballs, and four square balls). At 2:35 p.m. the kindergartners line up for an afternoon of specials: physical education and Spanish. At 3:55 p.m. the students are dismissed for the day. Again, I wanted to see just how time was spent in kindergarten and created the following graph to depict time spent on Wednesday, March 4, 2009.

Table 6.4.
Time Spent in Park Elementary Kindergarten: Wednesday, March 4, 2009



Thursday, March 5, 2009. The school day begins at 8:45 a.m. with a game of *Hangman* to determine that RJ is the student helper. The students then do a quick calendar review. This is the first day all week that all 21 students have been present. Mrs. Robinson gathers the children and reviews clocks. She draws on the white board a clock face and adds the numbers one through twelve. She proceeds to write five dash marks between the numbers to indicate minutes. The students are then instructed to tell time by the half hour. At 9:05 a.m. each student receives a worksheet to complete on telling time to the half hour. Students are reminded to put their heads down when they finish their assignment. Mrs. Robinson checks in with individual children; they complete the work before she can get to every child, so she instructs them to turn their paper over and draw a

clock with all the numbers. The next direction is to write in any time they wish, and she'll try to tell the time on their individual clock.

At 9:18 a.m., the students gather on the carpet, and Mrs. Robinson checks all their work and tries to guess the time on their hand drawn clocks. There is plenty of wait time for children until it is their turn, and they therefore become restless. Mrs. Robinson does not take notes on who has mastered the skill taught and who might need re-teaching. When posed with the question, "How do you gauge student progress?" Mrs. Robinson (interview notes, March 2, 2009) replied:

I do progress monitoring weekly and found limitations with that and also found areas where students needed further support. I have also made my own progress monitoring through nonsense word fluency and blending. I take notes. We do assessments through their work by looking at their worksheets and seeing what they are doing. We have end of the unit assessments that are put into their portfolios, report cards, and just observations.

At 9:28 a.m. the discipline is switched, and the focus becomes literacy. The group receives two worksheets from the *Drops in the Bucket* series. The focus of these papers is word families. One side has the letters _ish and the student is required to add the beginning sound to match the picture provided: Fish to match the picture of a fish. Students are instructed to raise their hand if they are confused with a picture or to ask friend to interpret the picture. Students work on this assignment as Mrs. Robinson calls a group to the back table. The activity at the back is much the same as in previous days: picture walk, fluency practice, and literal level questioning from the teacher on the book's content.

At 10:10 a.m. all papers are collected, and children begin to get ready for snack. One child wonders, “Do we get a sticker for our work?” Snack consists of a choice between pretzels and Cheerios. Recess begins at 10:26 a.m. with another warm and sunny day. The students have moved on from the water play and are busy with running races, swinging on the tire swings, and imaginative play. One group is still trying to catch the elusive leprechaun! A small group tries a game of hide-and-seek but soon realizes the limited places available to hide. Children are working on skills such as sharing, taking turns, and conflict resolution, and they have much freedom to move, explore, and have fun. At 11:05 a.m. the students are summoned to line up, and recess is over.

Today the entire kindergarten group is gathered in Mrs. Brown’s room for choice time. Small groups exit for speech therapy and English Language Learning class. The remaining, close to forty students, are given the following choices:

- Working on computers
- Swinging on an outdoor swing suspended from the ceiling
- Jumping on a mini-trampoline
- Playing with Lego
- Working on puzzles
- Drawing
- Playing with blocks
- Playing with action figures
- And playing at a sand table filled with rice

Mrs. Robinson walks the room checking in with each small group while Mrs. Brown works one-on-one with students from her class. In our interview I asked Mrs. Robinson to explain her role in play development of kindergartners and to elaborate on how play is facilitated. Mrs. Robinson's (interview notes, March 2, 2009) comments to those questions are as follows:

My role in play is to choose a book to have them listen to or a game that we can play together. A lot of that time is spent working one-on-one with kids. I provide the activities and give them the ideas; I create it. They know the guidelines. We do as a class select coloring sheets, so it is their choice what they want and I will get those. We have had a lot of games donated.

At noon the children go to lunch. The faculty is invited to a special lunch in their honor by the superintendent and various board members. Certificates are handed out for the hard work on behalf of the staff on IB, *SFAS*, and Response to Intervention.

At 12:45 p.m. Mrs. Robinson meets her students at the door, and they come into the room for story time. A parent volunteer arrives at 1:05 p.m. as writer's workshop begins. Students are asked to finish all incomplete projects in their writing folders.

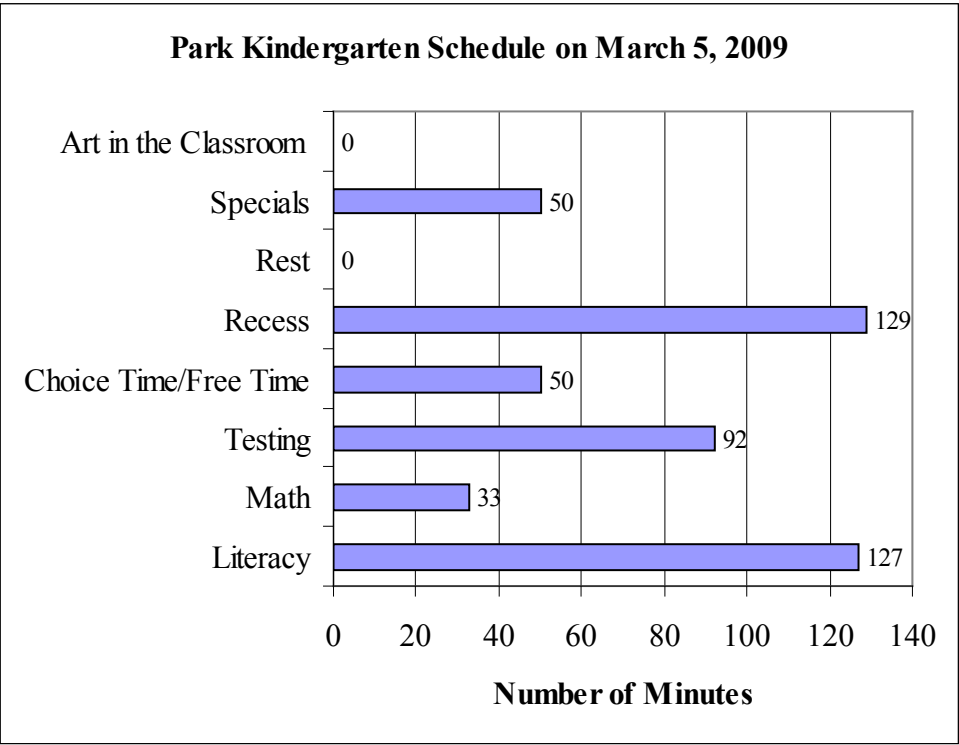
At 1:55 p.m. writer's workshop is over and the students prepare for afternoon recess. This recess is almost an hour long. I ask Mrs. Robinson (interview notes, March 2, 2009), "What have you learned from observing play in kindergartners?" She replied:

It is an important social skill. I have seen just a couple of kids who are single children who do not have that sibling interaction. They are normally the ones sitting by themselves at recess or in here quietly coloring and that is scary to me. Those kids need to know how to interact with their peers, and they need to learn how. I have seen that it needs to be a part of what kids learn. At this age the children are so egocentric, where it is all about them, so to get them to be open-minded and realize that even though I want this crayon, I cannot take it. They need to develop coping skills. I don't feel we have enough time to provide that. If you look at the report card and see all that is listed they need to know and

especially with PYP, that has put a huge crunch on the time we have to get everything done. I do not spend as much time on PYP as other classrooms do, for a couple of reasons. The children just aren't ready yet. They are still in the swing of a new school, new expectations, and a long day. I feel they first need the base for writing and reading. It is hard to fit it all in. I would like to offer them more time to interact and play, but we also have from the district, "This needs to be taught, and this needs to be taught."

At 3:00 p.m. the students return to class. The students appear tired but they have another 50 minutes in their school day. The students are then dismissed to media and computers. They are dismissed from school at 3:55 p.m. and line up to go to various locations: the bus, carpool, or after school care. The following graph demonstrates how time was spent in Mrs. Robinson's kindergarten class on Thursday, March 5, 2009.

Figure 6.5.
Time Spent in Park Elementary Kindergarten: Thursday, March 5, 2009



The school day is long at Park Elementary School. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the entire district works on an early release schedule on Mondays to allow teachers time for Professional Learning Communities work. School starts at 8:45 a.m. on Mondays and dismisses at 3:05 p.m. Tuesday through Friday the school day is from 8:45 a.m. to 3:50 p.m. The kindergarten schedule at Park is filled with many transitions throughout the day. The printed kindergarten schedule that was given to me is as follows:

Park Elementary Kindergarten Schedule

- 8:40-9:00 Welcome, Circle
- 9:00-9:25 Math
- 9:25-10:15 Reading Groups/Literacy
- 10:15-11:00 Snack, Recess
- 11:00-11:20ish Recess
- 11:20-11:50 Quiet Choice Time and Assessment
- 12:00-12:45 Lunch and Recess
- 12:45-1:15 Read Aloud: Rotate Classrooms
- 1:15-1:45 Writing Time
- 2:00-2:30 Recess
- 2:15-2:50 on Mondays the students have music followed by early dismissal at 3:05.
- Tuesdays from 2:30-3:50 the kindergartners have Spanish, art, and music and are dismissed at 3:55.

- Wednesdays from 2:45-3:50 the students have physical education followed by Spanish and dismissal at 3:55.
- Thursdays from 2:30-3:10 the students have choice time followed by physical education from 3:20-3:50 and dismissal at 3:55.
- Fridays the students come in from recess at 2:45 and have choice time until 3:20, and then they go to physical education until 3:50 and are dismissed at 3:55.

The students have physical education three times a week; music two times a week; Spanish twice a week; art twice a week; and media twice a week. The specialists are shared with another school in the Mountain View School District.

Literacy is taught in small groups within the classroom and through pull-out activities. According to Mrs. Robinson (interview notes, March 2, 2009):

In language arts we have sight words lists generated from the state list. In reading we use Houghton-Mifflin, and I have some big books and little texts, and Scholastic is our big supplier of books. I do not follow the teacher guide supplied by Houghton-Mifflin. We recently wrote a grant to the Parent Group and received monies to purchase more books. We have supplemented and implemented books from Modern Curriculum Press into our teaching repertoire. The way I make my plans and what the kids learn is based on their individual needs. I found that the teacher book was scripted and did not allow for the flexibility to meet my students where they were.

Mrs. Robinson elaborated when asked, “Have you received training in implementing the language arts curriculum?” She responded with the following:

Yes. I have had training in level one of the Primary Years Programme (PYP), which is classroom training. When I was hired I did a lot of research on PYP and what that included and the inquiry method of education. So I try to do a lot of inquiry lessons. I have had no training in using the Houghton-Mifflin reading

series. The implementation of spelling in kindergarten does not have a set list of spelling words that kids need to know. That is part of our new literature series.

I observed Mrs. Robinson using *Drops in the Bucket* (first grade level book) and other emergent readers' sets for literacy instruction. The lessons I observed in language arts were all didactic. Mrs. Ward, Park Elementary principal (interview notes, November 10, 2009) elaborated in her interview about reading progress in kindergarten at Park Elementary School:

I have noticed a really big difference in the reading instruction that is happening in kindergarten at Park compared with my previous school. Students are reading at a much earlier time of the year at Park. I think it happens because the teachers are accommodating students who come with a lot of background and taking them the next step. There is a lot of pretty focused reading instruction at a high level going on here. We do still have those kindergartners who don't have the alphabetic principle and who are just not ready to read yet. I think one of the things that happens because of this is that some of the students, who are low-average students, might look like they are a lot worse than they really are. I had a conversation with a first grade teacher and a parent about a child that the parent wanted to retain. When I looked to see where the student was, I was surprised this was even a conversation: the student was low-average in ability. I think the parent was comparing reading skills between peers. Teachers have a little bit of a skewed idea too.

Park Elementary School uses Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS) to benchmark and gauge student progress to inform instructional strategies for teachers. Teachers at Park also use their own assessments to gauge literacy progress.

Mrs. Ward, (interview notes, November 10, 2009) principal of Park Elementary School, when posed with the question, "How do you gauge kindergarten progress?" replied:

There are a lot of on-going assessments done in the classroom. We use DIBELS, the beginning stages of DIBELS, the beginning sounds. That test is not very reliable and so we struggle a little bit using it as our end-all measurement. There

are a lot more classroom assessments that are more meaningful at this point in time. But starting at our next benchmark time we'll have a lot more literacy accuracy in our assessment with DIBELS to be able to see how kids are progressing through learning phonemes and sounds.

When asked, "Does your school follow a specific kindergarten curriculum?" Mrs. Ward (interview notes, November 10, 2008) replied:

I think that we don't have a tight curriculum. We have ELOs (Essential Learning Outcomes) that help the teachers know what expectations there are for kindergartners and when those expectations are suppose to occur. We have materials, sufficient for reading and math. The district has been pretty loose about how people go about teaching the things they are supposed to teach. I think pretty much the only given that we have is the PYP. We at Park are fairly far along in the PYP. We are authorized and are in our, I believe, fourth grade of IB. So the teachers are pretty experienced in how to present PYP. Remember, PYP is a framework, not a curriculum.

When asked about the math curriculum, Mrs. Robinson (interview notes, March 2, 2009) replied:

In math we do not have a set curriculum. We follow the state standards and the district standards. We were on curriculum review last year for math but it was held up because of the *SFAS* grant, so the review was postponed for a year. I base what I teach off the state standards and what the kids need to learn. I don't have a textbook for math. On-line resources are fabulous; I get much of my material from on-line sites. Our vertical alignment in math is very different than the vertical alignment with PYP planners. Some of my students have the skills to do two column addition where that really is a second grade skill. So we decided to do what the child needs in math and do not worry too much about crossing that alignment. We only do that in math but not with PYP; we cannot touch that.

The science and social studies curriculum is woven throughout the PYP planners at Park Elementary School. Planner specific units such as oceans and dinosaurs use parts of Foss science kits for activities to support the curriculum. The planners used in kindergarten at Park Elementary School are as follows: How We Express Ourselves, the

Ocean, How the World Works, Every Family is Unique; Discoveries are a Window to the Past and a Key to the Present.

When asked if kindergarten students have time for free play within the classroom setting (frequency and length of time provided), Mrs. Robinson (interview notes, March 2, 2009) responded:

It depends on if it is snowy outside. If the weather is bad we will do an indoor recess where the students have free choice. You have seen quiet choice time; it is where they make the choice of a quiet activity. Free choice is just having at it. There is a dress up area, white boards. They can play with dolls, blocks, rescue heroes, and that is the duration of recess, about thirty minutes. Students can earn this time too. They get points on the board and once they accumulate enough points they can choose what they want to do. They almost always choose free choice. I try to do it once or twice a week as just open free time. It depends on the students if they are doing a really good job, getting along, voices aren't too loud, voices in control, and then it can last upwards of an hour. If they aren't getting along, their voices are too loud, and out of control, then it gets cut short.

Mrs. Ward (interview notes, November 10, 2008) has been in education for thirty-five years. She has seen curriculum shifts and much change during her tenure as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal,

In Nebraska, where I was an administrator in a setting which focused on developmentally appropriate practices for young children, we ran smack into NCLB and all the new requirements. I never saw such a complete change around in a very short amount of time. We struggled with how to balance what teachers had learned through DAP and what was being required from teachers and students from new regulations on expectations. These were very opposing viewpoints. Here at Park we also have high expectations on curriculum from parents. Our students enter kindergarten with many beginning skills, previously introduced and taught in kindergarten. Now parents ask, "What are you doing for my child to meet his/her needs?" All of our pressures do not necessarily come from NCLB. Our pressures here at Park also come from meeting the needs of our parents, and they hold high expectations.

Communication between home and the kindergarten classroom is through monthly newsletters and a blog site managed by the kindergarten teachers. The site posts classroom learning and summaries of activities the classes have accomplished. Due to the demographics of this particular school, the majority of the families have access to internet and their own personal computers. Park does not have homework expectations for kindergartners. As Mrs. Robinson noted, “Seven and a half hours in school is long enough, plenty. Do not push them at home. We have a website for families to consider that provides ideas but there are no requirements for homework in kindergarten at Park Elementary School.”

The Kindergarten Voice from Park Elementary School

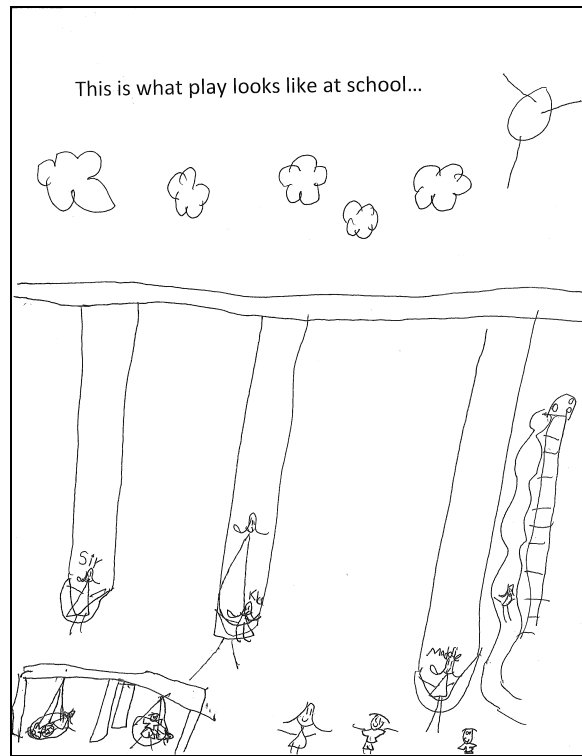
The kindergartners in Mrs. Robinson’s class were curious as to why I was in their room and always writing in my notebook. They eagerly came to work with me on March 5, 2009. I wondered how kindergartners themselves reflect upon or view the kinds (and amount) of play in which they engage in the school day. I worked one-on-one with students whose parents had given permission for them to work with me. In turn I asked each kindergartner if I could keep the artwork they created for me. (A copy of the work was given to each participant.) Following are eight examples of the work collected on March 5, 2009.

Susan shared that in kindergarten she does writer’s workshop, colors, reads books, and sometimes watches movies. When asked if she played in kindergarten, she listed the activities she engages in when playing: go down the slide, swing, and play games like tag

and puppy dogs; “Sometimes we go on the tire swings.” Susan drew the following picture, taking her time to think about the visual representation of the Park playground.

Figure 6.6.

Susan’s Illustration of Play at School



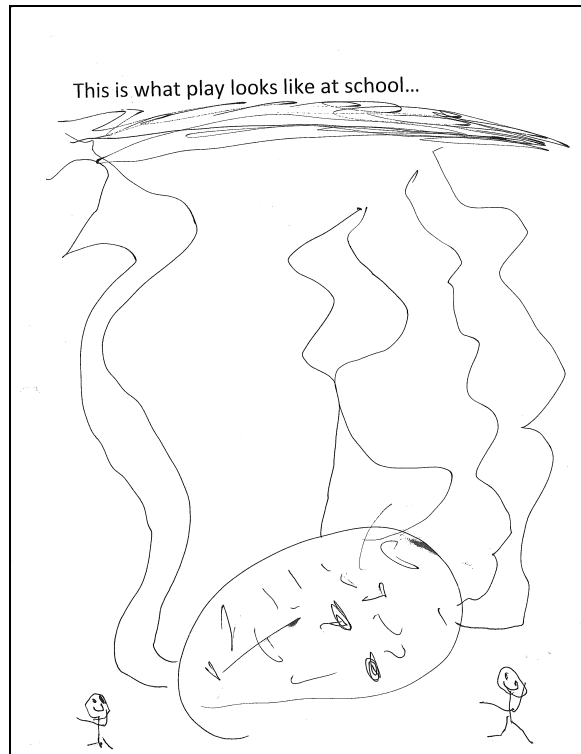
Susan often paused as if to pull up visual images of the playground lay-out, and her drawing is thus very accurate and detail oriented. She labeled her picture with her friends and attempted to write their names by their visual representations. I believe this drawing illustrates that kinship play is valued by Susan.

Paul, one of the younger children in the class and one of the imaginary play players, shared that in kindergarten he writes, and writes, and writes. He shared that at recess he plays games and that he makes up his own games, like Spiderman and Superman. (This was observed each day.) Paul (field notes, March 5, 2009) elaborated by

stating, “When you make up a game, we like be the boss of it. We make the name up and tell people what to do and what’s in the game. When you’re the boss you tell the rules.”

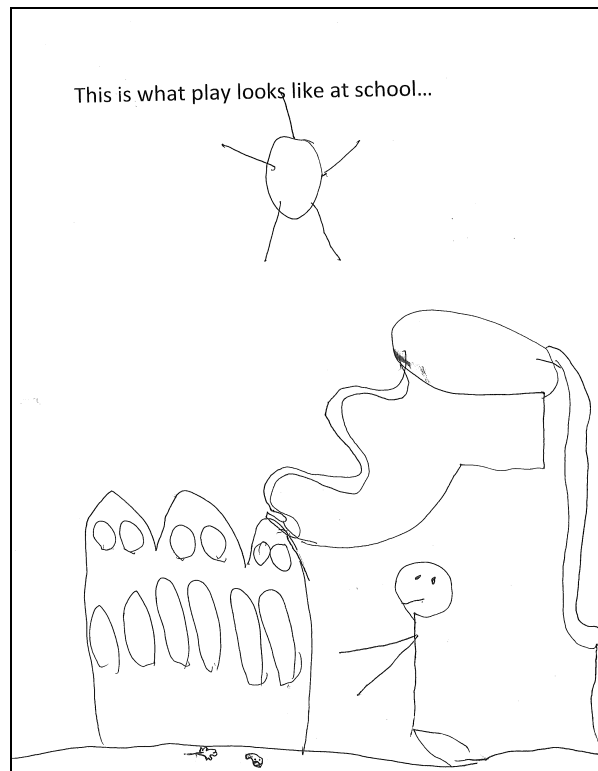
This description paralleled what was observed the day before on the playground. He explained rather succinctly the complexity of the roles assigned and exactly who was in charge.

Figure 6.7.
Paul's Illustration of Play at School



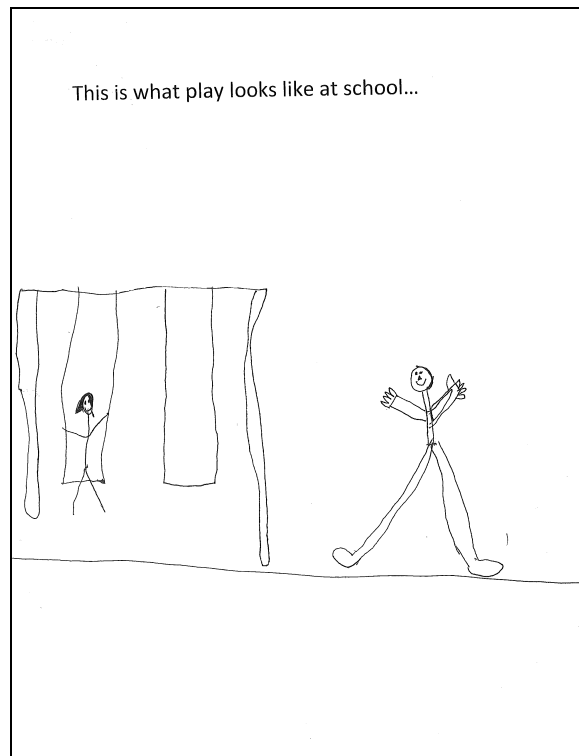
Alan shared that in kindergarten he writes, completes math work, and has literacy. Alan (field notes, March 5, 2009) elaborated and shared with me, “To get choice time you have to earn points for the class. You also get stickers for toys. If you’re really good or you’re good at mystery you get a sticker. You need fifteen stickers to get special stuff. I have twelve stickers; I need fifteen.” He elaborated that at recess he plays cats. In this game you move to different places and you find special stuff. “I found a special leaf and a Santa face once.” His picture follows and illustrates exactly what he described. I wondered if the recent game of catching a leprechaun inspired this variation of the game, playing cats.

Figure 6.8.
Alan's Illustration of Play at School



Alec shared that in kindergarten all he does is play. He runs at recess and is in running races. This was observed as an action Alec engaged in daily. He further shared that he goes down slides. He too talked about earning points for choice time in the classroom. Alec expanded the conversation by stating that inside he completes literacy tasks, works on math worksheets, and does enrichment group where he reads sight words. At home he plays memory, but he doesn't work on worksheets at home. He chose to draw the following illustration of the playground: a friend on the swing set and himself standing nearby.

Figure 6.9.
Alec's Illustration of Play in School

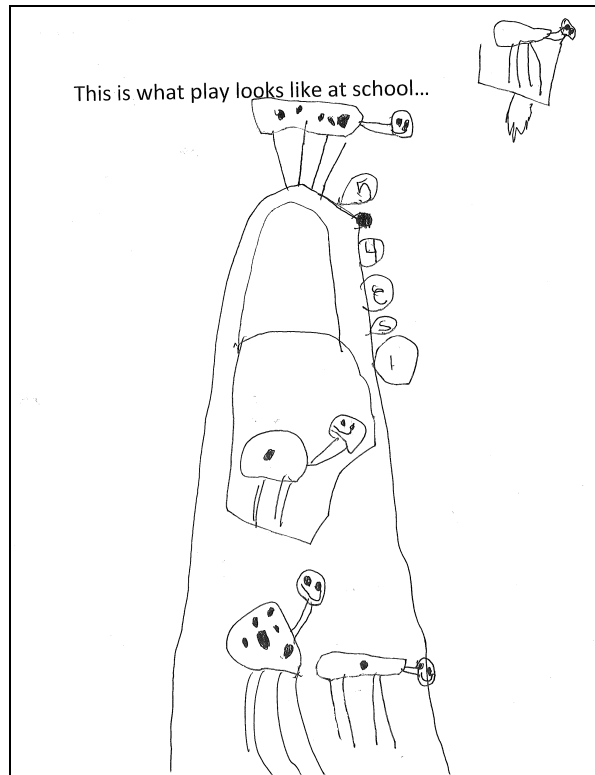


Todd was an exuberant child who stated that he writes in kindergarten, relaxes at story time, writes some more, reads, colors, and learns about clocks. When asked if he plays in kindergarten, Todd (field notes, March 5, 2009) replied,

On the playground and at recess, I play wild animals, and a game called King of the Wild. It is a make-believe game I play with Paul. I make up the rules and tell Paul. Paul is the uncle and he cannot be nice. Sally is the little kid, and she stays in a cage, but sometimes she escapes. Only I can stay out because I have sharp teeth with fangs. I protect the others.

When asked if he plays inside the kindergarten classroom, he responded, "We're not allowed to play this game inside." His drawing is elaborate and detailed. I believe Todd demonstrated kinship play (Elkind, 2007) in his description of his play.

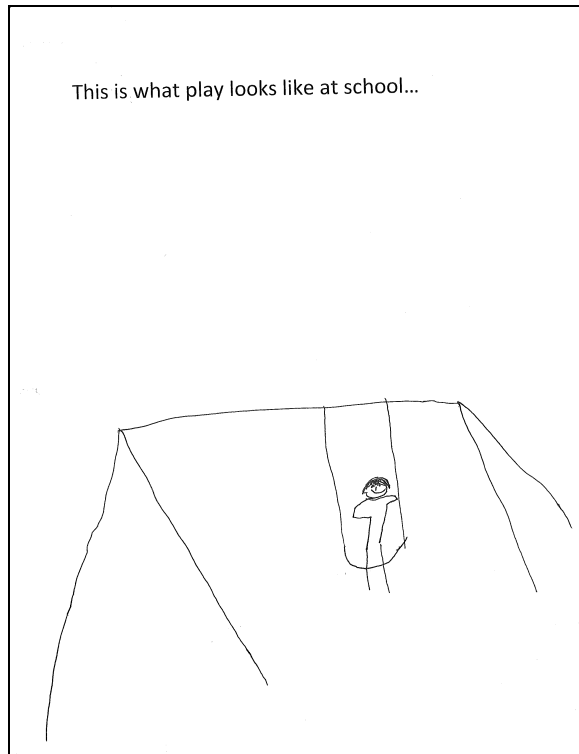
Figure 6.10.
Todd's Illustration of Play at School



Todd (field notes, March 5, 2009) went further to explain to me: “We live on Mount Everest. Only I can jump off the mountain top. Paul is afraid of the king, so he goes in the hot air balloon, but because I am the king, I can go there too. The mommy cat is at the bottom with the baby.”

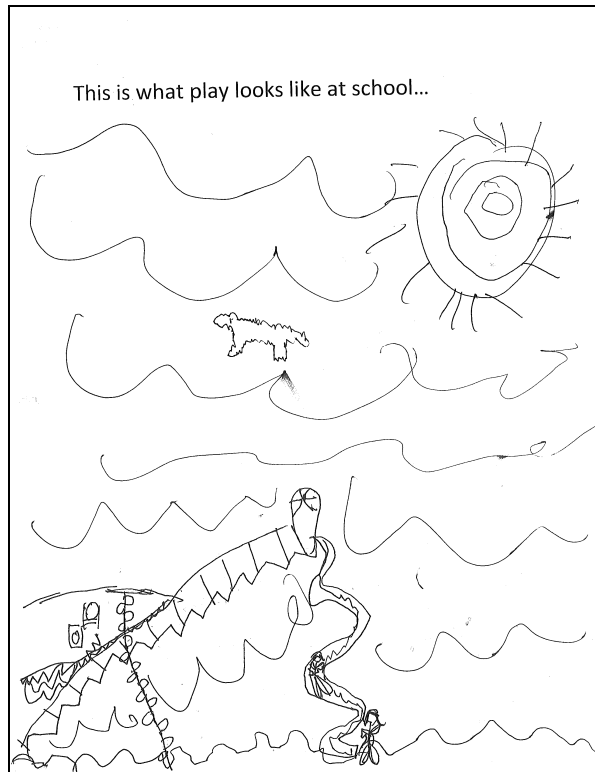
Collin, a very petite and quiet child, shared that in kindergarten he swings. When pressed a bit further to elaborate, he shared that he swings because it is fun and he can go really high. His drawing shows just what he described. Throughout my time at Park Elementary at recess, Collin would be observed swinging alone. His play could be classified as functional, simply exercising his muscles at recess time.

Figure 6.11.
Collin's Illustration of Play in School



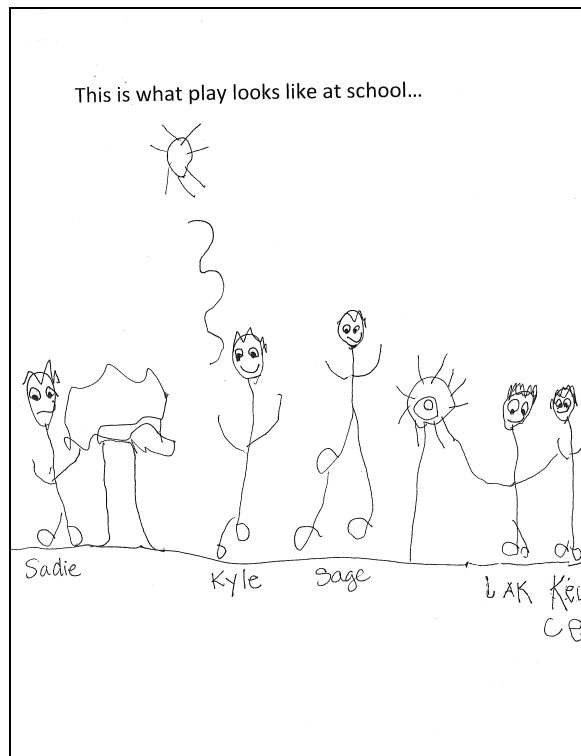
Sonja (field notes, March 2, 2009) chatted freely with me about what she does in kindergarten, “I write, fill up Mrs. Robinson’s water bottle, I learn. Did you know I can count to 100? I learn that after periods in your sentences an upper case letter comes next. I go to lunch, and I go with Mrs. Jones to learn about sounding out.” When asked about play in kindergarten Sonja shared that play is at recess, and she likes to go down the slides. Her drawing is detailed and shows the slides, the steps up to the slide, and the lamb she saw in the cloud formations.

Figure 6.12.
Sonja's Illustration of Play in School.



Kirk was the last child I met with on March 5, 2009. He explained that kindergarten is just great! He has specials, and he has special friends. When he plays he is on the swings outside. Kirk (field notes, March 2, 2009) elaborated, “Mrs. Robinson doesn’t play with me; she just watches me play.” He wanted to label his picture and asked me to write the names of a few friends. After I wrote three, he took over and sounded out two more. His drawing shows himself and four “special” friends on the playground. Kirk values friends in kindergarten and kinship play.

Figure 6.13.
Kirk's Illustration of Play at School



Chapter Seven: Eisenhower Elementary School

Play is not trivial. When children play, they're doing important work.

Fred Rogers

In order to provide a vivid and comprehensive picture of Eisenhower Elementary School, this chapter, as those which precede it, is divided into five sections. We begin with observations drawn from the Professional Learning Community meeting, followed by insights offered by the school principals (there are two at this site). The third section presents snapshot observations from the classroom and school environment I observed between May 4 and May 7, 2009. In this section I try to ascertain how one kindergarten teacher addressed both the school's and district's intentions while operating under her own beliefs about kindergarten instruction and culture. The fourth section outlines the kindergarten curriculum at Eisenhower Elementary School. The chapter ends with illustrations of how contemporary kindergartners reflect upon or view the kinds of play in which they engage within the school day.

Professional Learning Community at Eisenhower Elementary

I attended the school's Professional Learning Community meeting on Monday, May 4, 2009. Twenty-five faculty members were in attendance; two males and 23 females. The meeting started at 3:15 p.m. in the library. The library radiates warmth. There are quilts draped through the room and various reading posters and book covers. A poster displayed prominently states, "We value... respect, empathy, creativity,

confidence, cooperation, appreciation, independence, enthusiasm, commitment, tolerance, integrity, curiosity.”

The meeting kicked off in a celebratory fashion. The group looked at the recent CSAP scores and congratulated each other on the gains made. The group noted that the English Language Learners were growing and achieving. The principals (there are co-principals at this site, each working part-time) Mrs. North and Ms. Schoonmaker, thanked everyone for working so hard with CSAPs. The meeting then focused on up-and-coming events. The Colorado Department of Education Commissioner was making a visit to the school the next day to discuss the *SFAS* model with various district consistencies. All were asked to tidy their classrooms and hallways as a tour of the building was on the agenda the following morning.

At 3:40 p.m. the group was asked to switch their attention to the PowerPoint presentation on *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners* (Hill & Flynn, 2006). The group was concentrating on influences on student learning. They were asked to work in small groups to determine the top two influences on student learning. There was much conversation at the tables; the teachers interacted with one another respectfully. Each group then shared their thinking and compared it to the slides in the PowerPoint. It was evident that school leadership emphasizes a collaborative process that aims to improve instruction.

The conversation continued for another thirty minutes centered on *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners*. At one point the entire group numbered off and played a quick game to keep their attention and focus. The game

required multiple ways of knowing using all avenues to learning (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic). The meeting ended with a discussion on the new district innovation: Power Walk Through. The conversation stressed that the Power Walk Through is not evaluative, but rather looking at trends over time and building a common language and practice throughout classrooms. The session ended early at 4:30 p.m. to allow faculty members to tidy their rooms and hallways before the Commissioner made his visit the following day.

Description of Eisenhower Elementary School

Eisenhower Elementary School is one of the oldest schools in the district. The building opened in 1979. The school is the largest elementary school in the district and the most diverse. In October 2008 the enrollment for preschool through fifth grade was 356; in May of 2009 the enrollment was close to 333. The school predicted losing an additional thirteen students by the close of school, June 2, 2009. The decline started in October when the economy took a downturn. The ethnic breakdown at Eisenhower is 201 Hispanic children, 128 non-Hispanic, three Asian, and one American Indian. Eisenhower Elementary School is a Title One school.

Sixty percent of the students at Eisenhower Elementary School are non-white, and approximately 60 percent speak a language other than English at home. Sixty percent of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. This statistic is up from 48.8 percent in 2006-2007. The school also serves breakfast, and approximately 100 students have breakfast at the school on a daily basis.

Mrs. North, co-principal, has been in education for 35 years; she has embraced change and has been instrumental in making change during her tenure as teacher,

program support teacher, BOCES employee in Child Find, and administrator. As Mrs. North (interview notes, November 10, 2009) noted in regards to the impact of mandated tests:

One trend I have noticed in the last decade is the push down of curriculum. The increased grade level expectations occurred at the same time as state mandated testing. In the past, some districts altered their entrance dates to kindergarten so they could create a class of older kindergarten students who may perform better on state tests. Now, with a uniform entrance date across the state, there is assured consistency.

The school offers art, music, physical education, opportunities for civic and community engagement, internet safety programs, International Baccalaureate Programme, extracurricular activities, athletics, a preschool program, and a before-and-after school care program. Students at Eisenhower Elementary School have the opportunity to participate in activities such as student council, choir, chess, kilometer, and homework clubs. Students at Eisenhower who demonstrate the IB Learner Profile and take action in the community are recognized at assemblies. Parents are an integral component of the community and are active in PTSA, BAAC, classrooms, fundraisers, assemblies, and extracurricular and multicultural events. The parent organization raised money to support instructional resources and educational initiatives to benefit all students.

The school's goals are as follows:

Eisenhower Elementary School has a diverse population and continues to focus on best practice in addition to what it takes to become an International Baccalaureate school. Our first goal is to create caring learners. 100 percent of classrooms teachers will

teach and reflect on six Primary Years Planners by June 2008. By continuing to look at our teaching practices we expect all students to make growth. Our second goal is to have teachers document one year's growth in one year's time as measured by a body of evidence (CSAP, NWEA, or common assessment) for 95 percent of students by June 2008.

Eisenhower Elementary School made AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) in math but did not make AYP in reading; as reported for the 2007-2008 academic year. Based on this outcome parents were informed that their child may be eligible for extra academic instruction before or after school or in the summer and/or opportunities for mentoring.

The school's mission statement is as follows:

"Eisenhower Elementary School creates a life-long learning environment that challenges students academically, fosters respectful, caring, independent thinkers and develops global, responsible citizens who contribute to the development of a better world."

The school employs 23 full-time teachers and seven part-time teachers, one media specialist, a part-time counselor, and two part-time administrators. The school employs one full-time support staff member and four part-time support staff members. The school also has one full-time paraprofessional and eleven part-time paraprofessionals. Teachers average 10 years of teaching at this site. Thirteen employees have a master's or doctoral degree at Eisenhower Elementary. There are four kindergarten classrooms at Eisenhower Elementary School. I spent my time in Miss Brown's class.

Snapshots from the Classroom and School Environment at Eisenhower Elementary School

Monday, May 4, 2009. Eisenhower Elementary School is located in the heart of a residential neighborhood consisting of apartments, duplexes, and single-family homes. The neighborhood is nestled in a valley with 360 degree views of the Rocky Mountains. A dozen bikes are parked at a bike rack, even a bike with training wheels. As one approaches the school, one immediately notices a small fenced-in playground in the front of the school for the preschool. A large, colorful sign also greets each visitor with the saying, *Reach for the World!*, which is also rendered in Spanish, *Alcanzando al Mundo!* The sign is situated between two large sharpened wooded pencils and a big globe of the world. There is also a bulletin board in both English and Spanish announcing upcoming events at school.

A drop off and pickup area is located at the front of the school; the parking lot is north of the building. The entry way to school is adorned with flowers. I witnessed parents and grandparents participate in walking their children to school.

As you enter the building the office is immediately to your left. The entryway is graced with artwork, banners, plants, a vase of fresh flowers, and much color. The artwork is from the students and is framed and labeled. There are comfortable couches and chairs for visitors, complete with a light to help with reading. The entryway is well lit, and a display case highlights items from the school store that promote Eisenhower: water bottles and a variety of clothing items. The office also showcases a poster board created by a student to share the day's weather, temperature, and if you need to wear or a

jacket or not. There is a table located near the office door that contains much literature on services in the area, summer opportunities in the community, school news, and literature. There is also a handout on the mobile medical clinic that comes to Eisenhower twice a week, staffed by a physician's assistant. Throughout the school you can see the IB attitudes posted along with numerous posters on bully-proofing your school. All handouts on the table are printed in both English and Spanish.

Throughout my time at Eisenhower, the staff was friendly, welcoming, inviting, and engaging. You are immediately drawn into a warm, caring, and diverse community that models respect throughout the school's entire program. It is evident that learning and creating community is valued at this school. Throughout my time at Eisenhower both English and Spanish were spoken.

Miss Brown's room is located in the back of the school building. The door into the classroom has a quote from Claude Monet — "You will need to be very patient just like a gardener" — gracing the entrance. The room is a large rectangle, $\frac{3}{4}$ carpeted and $\frac{1}{4}$ tiled. There is a bank of windows facing east, complete with yellow valences. The classroom has endured three large ceiling leaks throughout the winter, and three ceiling tiles are missing.

There is a sink, two computers, refrigerator, five tables for teaching and learning, a teacher's desk and chair located in the back of the room, and many centers were established throughout the room. The centers are clearly marked with hanging signs A, B, C, D. There is an established play area near the windows complete with a kitchen set, telephones, and a basket of multi-ethnic dolls, stuffed animals, a Lego table, a listening

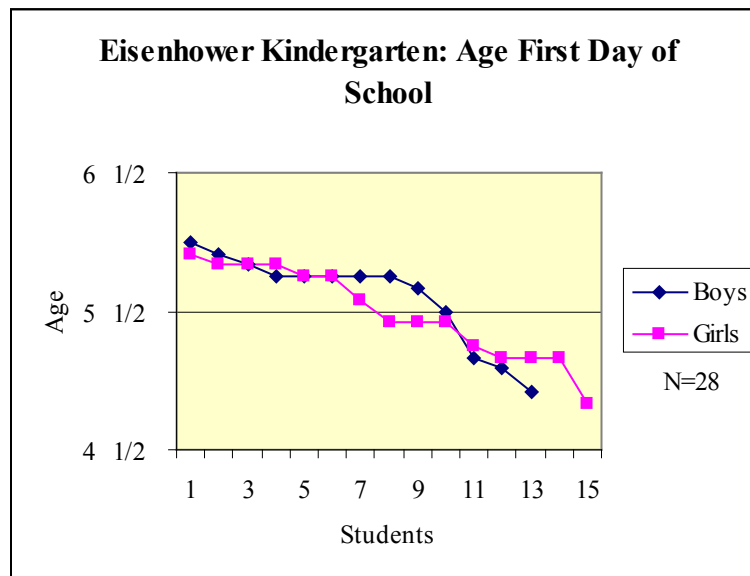
center, and a variety of games. There are bookcases scattered throughout the room displaying books on dinosaurs.

At the calendar and circle area there is a large paper tree (floor to ceiling) with a variety of paper leaves. There is a colorful word wall located near the tables where the children do the majority of their work. Each student in the class is represented on the word wall under the letter their name begins with (as well as by a picture of each student). There is a large, teacher-made bulletin board highlighting dinosaurs and centered on the PYP planner, *We Can Dig: Discoveries Are a Window into the Past*.

At 8:40 a.m. one of the two co-principals, Mrs. North, announces on the loudspeaker that the all-school assembly will begin in ten minutes. (I later learn that the school has two all-school assemblies per month.) The kindergartners file into the classroom at 8:45 a.m., and there is a flurry of excitement as the kindergarten will be singing at the assembly. Miss Brown quickly takes attendance and the hot lunch count; she easily trades off between English and Spanish. Students know the routine and appear ready to start their day. Miss Brown has a class of 11 students. She has lost nine students since the October count. Many of the families have relocated to Mexico due to the declining economy. Two kindergarten classrooms interchanged throughout the day based on the dual language program philosophy of the school. The kindergarten enrollment for the classrooms on August 27, 2008, was 28 students — 13 males and 15 females. The average age of a beginning kindergartner was five years and six months at Eisenhower. The average age for boys was five years and seven months and five years and five

months for girls. On average, students from Eisenhower who started kindergarten in 2008 were older than students who started kindergarten in 2008 at Park and Springs.

Figure 7.1.
Eisenhower Kindergarten: Age First Day of School



The students file into the multi-purpose room (lunchroom and gym) and take their places on the floor. Parents and grandparents can be seen sitting along the perimeter of the room on benches. The students stand and recite the pledge of allegiance in English and they recite the school pledge (touchstone) in English and Spanish. Mrs. North addresses the group, welcomes them to school and shares the good news of the recent third grade reading test — all scores have gone up! The co-principal, Ms. Schoonmaker, then presents the percentages of the accelerated reader: 7 percent involvement in September and 88 percent involvement in May from Eisenhower students. Next up is the chess club and all the volunteers who have helped with the morning offering. Certificates are passed out, and volunteers are thanked.

The fourth grade then comes to the front of the room and honors the custodian, Mr. Sam, who is battling cancer. The class presents him a check for \$568.00 to defer medical bills. The students raised the money through a variety of fund-raising events.

The school counselor then addresses the group. The school focuses on an IB attitude each month and recognizes students and/or teachers demonstrating the attitude. This activity highlights explicit attitudes, names the attitude with an action, and recognizes the deed. As each deed is read aloud, the child stands. Half the school population is standing when the speaker finishes.

Mrs. North then shares the news of the special visitor to Eisenhower on Tuesday, the Commissioner of Colorado's Education Department. She also elaborates on the upcoming Language Fair to be held on Thursday, May 7, 2009. To end the assembly the kindergarten classes sing the Eisenhower school song in Spanish. The entire all-school assembly creates school pride, a sense of community, and shared values and attitudes. The assembly ends at 9:28 a.m.

The kindergarten class sits on the carpet at the front of the classroom and excitedly talks about singing in front of the whole school. They decide among themselves that at the next all-school assembly they would like to sing the school song in English. Miss Brown leads the group in the calendar work. The students talk about what day of the week it is (Monday) and talk briefly about the holiday tomorrow, Cinco de Mayo. They eagerly sing a song called "Days of the Week" to the tune of the Munster's television show of decades ago. The class meteorologist checks the weather and places the

appropriate picture of the weather next to May 4, 2009, on the calendar. Miss Brown demonstrates kindness, warmth, and enthusiasm toward her students.

The students review the months of the year. The name of each month is posted on a train car, and a student points to the word as the children recite in unison all twelve months. Miss Brown moves to an oversized chair, and the children shift their focus as Miss Brown announces that recess will be in 10 minutes. She decides to read some silly poems. The students listen intently to a collection of poems from the book *It's Raining Pigs and Noodles* (Prelutsky & Stevenson, 2000). The word *ancient* is read, and Miss Brown uses this opportunity to introduce a new vocabulary word. The students listen to the definition and connect the word *ancient* with their study of dinosaurs.

At 9:50 a.m. students wash their hands and prepare for a snack of graham crackers. At 10:00 a.m. the class exits to the playground. The playground is situated at the back of the school. It is a cold day, and new snow has fallen on the field. A few students can be observed making snowmen. A conversation is overheard from this group, "We cannot balance him!" The snowman topples over.

The playground is a large field complete with a backstop for baseball, two small gardens surrounded by rock borders and a sign *Keep Out! Plants Trying to Grow Here*, and two graveled areas complete with apparatus: monkey bars, swings, three slides, and a climbing structure. There are a few picnic tables scattered throughout the area.

There are two teachers on duty. Students are running, chasing, and playing on all the equipment provided. A small group of older boys are engaged in playing catch with mitts and a baseball. Another small group of older students is playing a soccer game on

the field. Imaginative play is observed with a small group of boys playing pirates. Both Spanish and English are spoken on the playground, and children of various ethnic backgrounds are playing together.

When asked, “What have you learned from observing play in kindergartners?”

Miss Brown (interview notes, November 17, 2008) answered:

They surprised me a lot. I think it is more important than I give it credit for being, especially in the social development of children. They are just finding out who they are. I think play helps them know what they like, what they don't like. I also feel it helps with the dynamic of the class getting to know one another, feeling each other's thresholds out. It is also very important for me as a teacher I think it allows me to know their personal development, how mature they are, what they are able to use as far as skills wise when they play. It also lets me know their drive, and determination to learn.

When pressed further with the following questions, “What is your role in play development of kindergartners? How is play facilitated?” Miss Brown (interview notes, November 17, 2008) replied:

It varies on the day. At the beginning of the year play was very structured. We did one center at a time. One day we all went to the games and I introduced the games or the puzzles we have. I showed them how to get the puzzles out and where to put the box lid. It drives me nuts when they step on the box and break it! How to play the game with good sportsmanship and then to go with our PYP attitude about being caring. How do you invite someone to play with you? What do you say? If your game is already full, what could you say that is a kind response? We went through the same routine throughout the room with all the centers. Some days I sit down and play with them. Other days especially around testing time, I am pulling students and reviewing activities: letters, numbers, shapes, and colors, whatever they may need to help them. I think I try to provide as much play option as possible. Kids are allowed to use the games, puzzles, read, computer, go to listen at the listening center, Lego, or dress-up clothes.

A bell from inside the school rings at 10:20 a.m. signaling the end of recess.

The small group of eleven students gathers around the circle back in the classroom. Miss Brown reviews the work to be completed at each center. Students rotate through the centers (A, B, C, D) during the week. Miss Brown (interview notes, November 17, 2008) elaborated on her thinking:

We do centers during literacy time where kids are given three options of centers to do. For example, computers, they did a listening center. Today they made a collage for family. I consider that a kind of play because it isn't direct instruction. I am not watching them, I don't redirect them, it is their responsibility to do those things and complete those tasks, and they have to get all three centers done in the hour that we have. You can definitely tell through their activities and motions who really understands. You can see maturity levels. I have some kids who will sit down and teach another child the entire packet, and I also have some kids who will just color. Play is very important, and I do make a lot of informal assessments by watching children play.

The work is from *Phonics Fundamentals II, Home Learning Tools* (practice with lower case letter writing) and a beginning consonant worksheet; all worksheets are didactic. At 10:25 a.m. another adult, Miss Susan, enters the room and begins end of the year assessments with the students one-on-one. Later I learned that Miss Susan is the school nurse who also doubles as a co-teacher during busy assessment periods. As Miss Susan assesses individual students, she uses a teacher-made packet which assesses literacy, math, and writing. The same assessment is given three times a year and is stored in one packet for reflection and growth. Miss Brown rotates to the other ten children and helps them when they have questions.

At 10:35 a.m. Miss Brown invites a student to join her at a table for a reading assessment; they work together for 20 minutes. The class is on task, and the children

work quietly on their worksheets. They are observed consulting the word wall for the spelling of specific words for their worksheets.

At 11:02 a.m. the literacy block comes to a close. All work, finished or unfinished, is placed in a colored folder at each center. Miss Brown counts down from five to zero, and the children are ready for the transition to math.

Students take their seats at various tables, and all face south to see the overhead projection on the wall. Miss Brown reviews the rules of the math class with the students and plays a variety of games. The students are working with the “magic number 11.” The class sings a math song and then works on a game, “Switch-A-Roo,” involving number families ($11 + 4 = 15$; $4 + 11 = 15$). Next they play “Snake ‘N Down!” and sing another song that reminds them which direction a row is located and which direction a column is located. Students are on task throughout the entire math lesson that lasts fourteen minutes; the math activities are all multi-sensory. *Stand Out Math* (Miller, 2003) is the program Miss Brown uses in this math lesson. At 11:16 a.m. the students are handed a worksheet to complete that focuses on subtraction. Miss Brown instructs her students to use their fingers to figure out the problems (no manipulative are provided). At 11:25 a.m. all papers are collected and children wash their hands and prepare for lunch and recess.

Promptly at 12:20 p.m. the children come in from recess, and it is time to relax. Miss Brown does two minutes of relaxation skills with the students, ringing a chime and helping them relax. Next she reads *A Day with Wilbur Robinson* (1993), by William Joyce. Students listen intently to the story.

At 12:45 p.m. the class line up for specials and begins to walk down the hall for physical education, but they immediately return to the classroom, as there has been a change in plans. Miss Brown is composed and comfortable with the change and provides the students with a dinosaur work packet. The group meets together to talk about the skeletons of various dinosaurs. Miss Brown enjoys what she does. Her demeanor is calm and friendly, and the children are not afraid to pose questions and converse. The students go to various tables and work on a matching activity of dinosaur skeletons to dinosaurs.

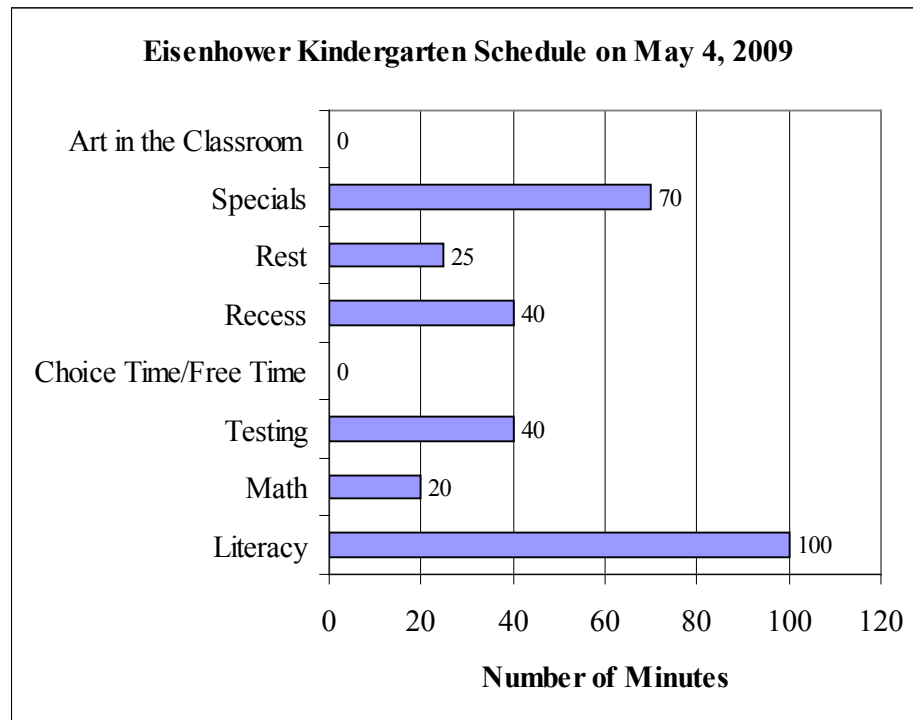
This activity ties to the work the class is doing on *We Can Dig It*, the PYP planner. The key concepts of this planner are change and reflection. The students use the vocabulary words *carnivore* and *herbivore* comfortably as they work. Miss Brown reads a variety of dinosaur poems aloud as students complete their assignment. At 1:15 p.m. the class lines up for art.

The art room is inviting with a large colorful rug on the floor. Mrs. Barry greets the children amiably and asks them to take a seat on the rug. Eisenhower promotes global citizenship, and Mrs. Barry has a huge world map on her wall with the caption, “Where in the World is Art?” She has labeled the countries and projects students have completed: i.e. Australia: Aboriginal Art; Mesa Verde: Rock Art; France: Claude Monet. The art room also displays all the IB attitudes and various art posters. The students are working on 18-inch by 36-inch self-portraits with paint as the medium. The students are on task and conversing with one another. The class ends at 1:45 p.m. and the students are back in the kindergarten room at 1:50 p.m.

A fourth-grade student, Hank, enters the kindergarten and gathers the children around him. He proceeds to read *Ruby the Copycat* (Rathmann, 1991). Miss Brown informs me that this happens every Monday through Thursday in her classroom. Both the kindergartners and Hank seem to enjoy the connections they have made through literature. Miss Brown thanks Hank for the story and then gives him another picture book to practice at home that evening so he is prepared to read it on Tuesday to the class.

At 2:00 p.m. students line up for Spanish class or English Language Learning. The Spanish classroom is filled with props, posters, flags, and charts. The entire class is conducted in Spanish. There are seven children from Miss Brown's class in attendance and eight children from the other kindergarten class. The students work on vocabulary building activities, including a play in preparation for the Language Fair. At 2:40 p.m. all kindergartners are back in their classroom. The students start assembling their belongings to go home. At 2:50 p.m. the students exit the room to take a bus home, meet a parent or grandparent, or attend Day Camp at school. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, as a researcher, I knew what I had seen throughout the day at Eisenhower Elementary but needed to visualize just how time was spent in kindergarten. In reviewing my notes, disciplines emerged. I then assigned time to each discipline observed. The following graph illustrates just how time was spent in Eisenhower Elementary School in Miss. Brown's class on Monday, May 4, 2009.

Figure 7.2.
Time Spent in Eisenhower Kindergarten: Monday, May 4, 2009



Tuesday, May 5, 2009. I arrived at 9:50 a.m. due to an engagement at work. The students are preparing to go outside for recess. I join them on the playground. A group decides to dig for dinosaur bones near the garden. On Monday there had been a snow fall, but on Tuesday the sunshine made a debut along with many signs of springs — including worms! The kindergartners abandon their dig for dinosaurs and start to dig and hunt for worms on the sidewalk, under rocks, in the garden; they even start digging in the ground to locate more worms.

Another group of kindergartners is playing dinosaurs. One can hear them call out, “Pterodactyl’s are meat eaters! You’re a herbivore!” The game resembles tag as there is much chasing involved, with running and screaming. Both English and Spanish are

spoken. I believe this play scene illustrates (ideally) symbolic play in the way it organizes meaning in language and thought, especially through dual languages.

At 10:20 a.m. the bell rings, and the students line up. Many leave their worms in secret hiding places until the next recess. One student says to another as they file into the building, “We started digging for dinosaur bones, but instead we found worms!” (field notes, May 5, 2009). This strikes me as an illustration of just how flexible and adaptive children can be when allowed the freedom to pick and choose their play.

At 10:23 a.m. the students start their literacy centers, and Miss Susan arrives to work one-on-one with students on their yearend assessments. Miss Brown rotates throughout the room helping students. As children finish their worksheets they quietly go to another activity: computer, listening center, and puzzles or games.

At 11:05 a.m. the literacy block ends, and math begins. The teachers have created a document of *Essential Agreements*. One such agreement is the creation of a math vocabulary book. Each grade level has developed a list of math vocabulary words each student in that grade should know. Today the kindergartners are working on the definition and illustration of *number*. The students work until 11:22 a.m. on this project and then wash their hands and prepare for lunch.

At 11:30 a.m. all the students are in the lunchroom. Parents and grandparents are welcome to join their children for lunch. Each day I observe a half dozen to a dozen adults participating and eating lunch with the children. At 11:55 a.m. the students are lined up and ready for recess.

Digging for worms continues as a recess activity. Students are also seen swinging on traditional swings and the tire swings, running and playing tag, and swinging on the monkey bars. Two older boys are wearing special t-shirts that say, *I Stick My Neck Out*. I later learned these boys are recess monitors and that they help younger students with conflict resolution on the playground. Recess ends at 12:15 p.m.

The kindergartners return to class at 12:20 p.m. and start their relaxation exercises with Miss Brown (field notes, May 5, 2009), “I’ll play ten chimes to relax today. Try breathing deep into your toes. Relax your body, your mind. Deep breaths.” The only sound in the room is Miss Brown’s voice and the chime of the bell. As soon as the relaxation exercises are over, Miss Brown reads a book to the class on Cinco de Mayo.

At 12:48 p.m. the class prepares to go to music class. Music is taught by a young, energetic teacher, Mr. Parker. He works with the students on music and movement in addition to high and low sounds. Throughout his room are posters of composers, many instruments, and the IB attitudes. The students then learn a new song in Spanish that reviews the names of the body parts. Class ends at 1:15 p.m.

Following music the students participated in physical education. They do a series of warm up drills: skipping, hopping, jumping, galloping, and running. Next they play with a parachute. The teacher, Miss Harmon, reviews the rules when playing with a parachute; the children are eager to play a game called, *Lifeguard*. The students are so enthusiastic the game is repeated three times. The next game is *Cat and Mouse*, and this game is also met with excitement. At 1:50 p.m. class is dismissed, and the students return to kindergarten.

The students are given a May poem color sheet to complete at their tables. All are on task. As the students work on the assignment, Miss Brown catches up on paperwork at her desk. At 2:05 p.m. the class is asked to stop and prepare for a switch. Seven students depart for instruction in Spanish down the hall, and six new students join the remaining four students and the ELL teacher on the carpet. The ELL students are working on the vocabulary words and concepts attached to, "I can," "I can't," "Do," and "Don't." The lesson is action-packed, fast, and complete with a YouTube video demonstrating the vocabulary and concepts. The students are dismissed from this lesson at 2:30 p.m. and scatter to their respective kindergarten rooms. Another group of 10 students enters Miss Brown's room. Miss Brown proceeds to ask the children what they want to be when they grow up. As they share their desired occupation, Miss Brown writes it down on a special piece of paper for each child to illustrate. This activity continues until 2:55 p.m.

At 3:00 p.m. all children have returned to their home classroom for free playtime. Two boys negotiate on what game to play and finally decide on Candyland as two girls join them. A group of boys decides to play with the Lego, and a group of girls play in the housekeeping area. The girls quickly don the dress-up clothes and take out the baby dolls. One girl sings to her doll, and another can be heard saying, "I'm going to be the big sister." Soon they are folding clothes and tidying the area.

Three boys have their heads down at a table. I later learn of a classroom management strategy employed in the kindergartens at Eisenhower Elementary School. The students were read a book at the beginning of the year on apples. The book describes

red apples as yummy, green apples as yummy, but yellow and blue apples as yucky.

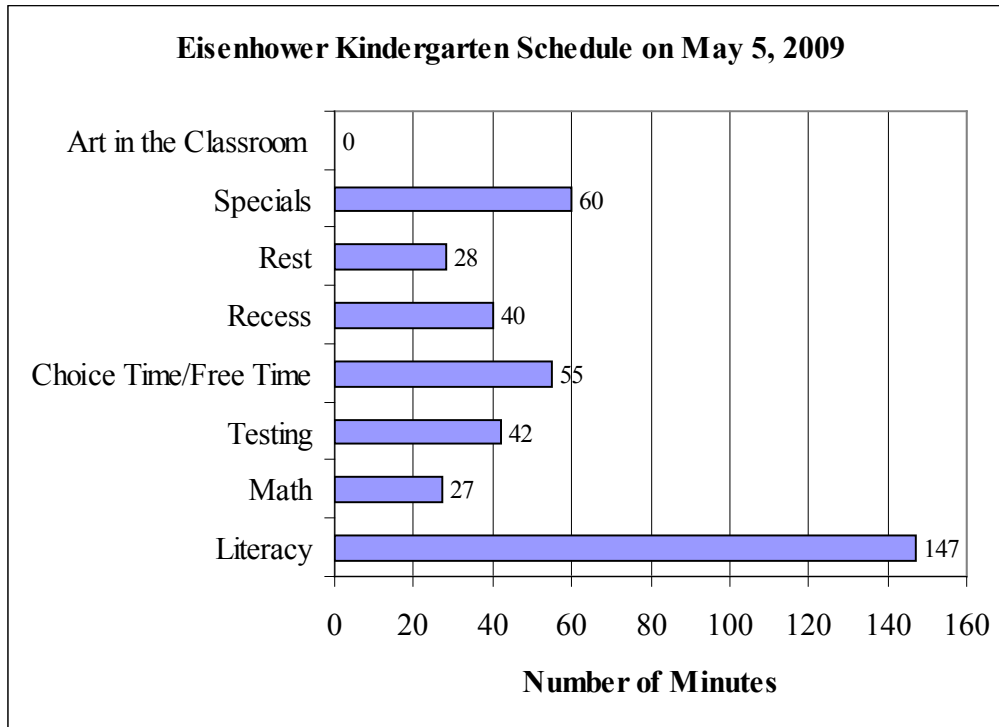
Classroom rules were discussed and the class narrowed the rules to two:

1. Don't hurt anyone on the inside or outside.
2. Show respect to the people and things in our school.

Each student starts the day with a red apple. If an infraction occurs during the day, the child must change the red apple to a yellow apple; the yellow apple signals five minutes missed from free playtime. If another infraction occurs, the yellow apple is replaced with a blue apple. The blue apple indicates the complete loss of free playtime. Two boys each have blue apple. Free playtime lasts 35 minutes, and at 3:35 students are instructed to clean up and start packing up for the day. As soon as children have packed up they sit in a circle on the carpet. Miss Brown ends the day with sharing. Two students share items from home, and the class is dismissed at 3:45 p.m. The following graph depicts how time was spent on Tuesday, May 5, 2009, in Miss Brown's classroom.

Table 7.3.

Time Spent in Eisenhower Elementary School Kindergarten: Tuesday, May 5, 2009



Wednesday, May 6, 2009. The school day begins at 8:45 a.m. with the calendar, lunch count, and weather report. All 11 students are present today. At 9:05 a.m. the school counselor arrives to teach a lesson on appreciation (the May IB attribute). She reads a story, *Heartprints* by PK Hallinan (1999), to the students. Much discussion occurs surrounding the theme in the book. Each child is then given a paper heart and is asked to give the heart to someone to thank them for something. They are asked to present the heart to someone at school and watch the recipient's face. The students are enthusiastic to complete this assignment. The students then focus on explicit instruction from the counselor on problem-solving techniques. The students' role-play a few situations, and

the counselor exits the room at 9:25 a.m. I later learn her position is .5 counselor and .5 ELL. It is evident that resources are carefully planned for at Eisenhower Elementary School to provide students access to success.

Miss Brown invites her students to enjoy center time for the 35 minutes that remain before recess begins. At recess more worms emerge and are captured by the eager hands of the kindergartners. A few students have empty plastic milk containers and immediately place their worms into this new habitat. The morning recess block, from 10:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m., is for kindergartners only, and the faculty is diligent about staffing this time with both an English-speaking teacher and a Spanish-speaking teacher for problem solving. Very few children play alone at this recess time.

The kindergartners engage in play by using the monkey bars, hanging, running, and chasing (and digging!). Through play on the playground, the students are afforded opportunities to use new social skills and work through the understanding of new concepts. I overhear a few children in the garden area: “I’ve been hunting since January for worms. Well, I’ve been hunting for 100 years! We’re all worm hunters! Will this worm turn into a butterfly?”

One child suggests to his friends to leave the worms alone, “How would you like it if you kept getting picked up?” Here is an example of play’s role in building empathy. Recess ends at 10:15 a.m.

The class resumes literacy worksheets and centers. Miss Susan arrives and works one-on-one with the remaining students who need to finish their yearend assessments. At 11:05 a.m. the literacy block ends, and math begins. Today, the class is playing color and

shape *Bingo*. Miss Brown reviews the expectations for the game and the children are raring to go and partake in the game. At 11:25 a.m. the class cleans up the game, washes hands, and departs for the lunchroom.

I join the teachers in the teachers' lounge for lunch today. One veteran teacher and I engage in conversation. Mrs. Romero is a kindergarten teacher who relocated from teaching kindergarten, second, and third grade in Denver for many years. We talk about my observations and the themes of my dissertation. Mrs. Romero (field notes, May 6, 2009) volunteers the following: "Now I am doing activities in kindergarten that I did in second and third grade, like the word wall. I feel the pressure of teaching so many skills. I can only imagine the pressure the children feel." I soon rejoin the children on the playground.

A few boys are playing *Duck, Duck, Goose* on the field. Worm digging continues to be a popular activity. A group of six boys is playing dinosaurs, and one older boy is sitting at a picnic table, totally engrossed in the seventh book of the Harry Potter series. There are no conflicts observed, and children seem to be enjoying their time together and the fresh air.

The bell rings at 12:15 p.m., and all children run to line up. Again, the students return to class for relaxation exercises with Miss Brown. At 12:30 p.m. they gather at their tables to make Mother's Day cards. Miss Brown has a model of a card she would like the students to replicate. The activity is teacher directed and asks students to do much cutting and pasting. It is somewhat reminiscent of Froebel's paperwork. The card is folded, and on the outside each student makes a flower using a muffin baking cup. Once

each child has completed his or her card, Miss Brown takes a picture of him or her, and the photograph is inserted into the middle of the muffin baking cup. The class is on task and completes the project with ease.

At 1:10 p.m. the class departs for specials and returns at 1:50 p.m. Hank is unable to read to the group today because he failed to bring in his homework: instead, Miss Brown reads the book created by the students, “When I Grow Up I Want to Be...” When the story is finished the students are asked to enjoy D.E.A.R. time (Drop Everything And Read). They do so with ease.

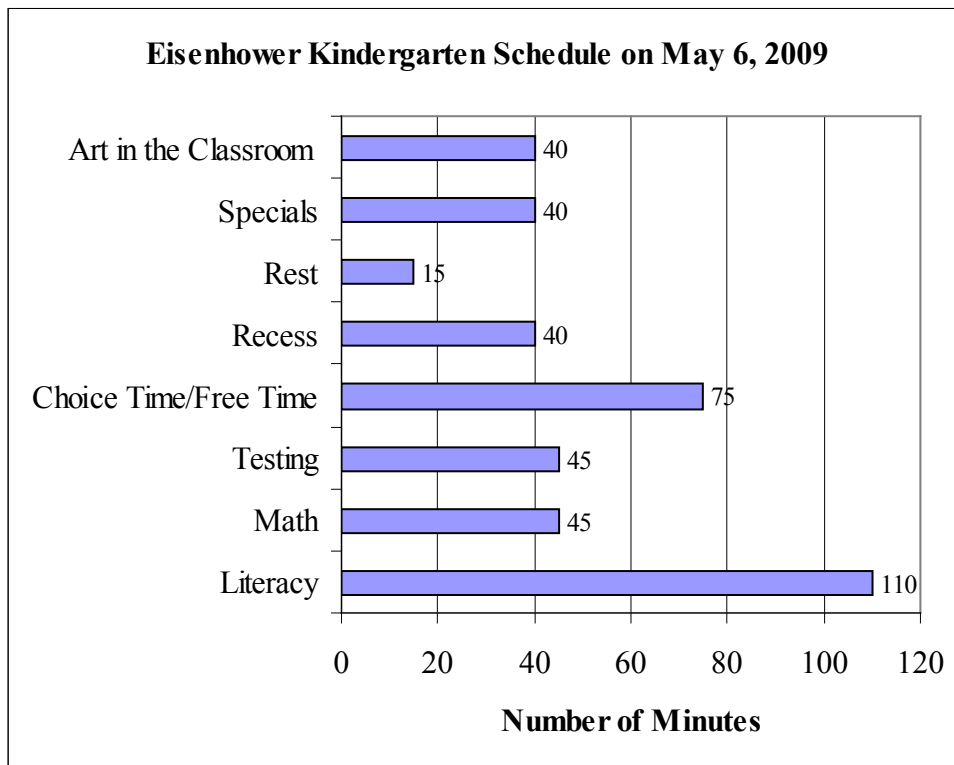
At 2:10 p.m. the classes switches to their first language. Miss Brown is with the English speakers, and the students return to their dinosaur work. They promptly go to the field and try to figure out which dinosaur runs faster, one with two legs or one with four legs? The students participate in running races using two legs and then getting down on all fours. Much giggling and falling over occurs. It is apparent that Miss Brown has created a playful approach to learning. The students review the vocabulary words “faster” and “slower.” New skill development has occurred without the use of workbooks and progress monitoring; the children appreciate this mode of learning. The class is back inside at 2:25 p.m., and students begin a worksheet that is a maze on dinosaurs. At 2:35 p.m. they exit the room, and another group of children enter.

The new group is required to write a story in their notebooks. They seem tired and have a hard time concentrating on the task at hand. This activity continues until 3:05 p.m. when another switch of students takes place. At 3:05 p.m. the original 11 students reappear and start free playtime. The children are seen playing a variety of games,

building Lego structures, and playing in the housekeeping area. Two boys have blue apples and sit at the teaching tables. They are also required to write apology notes. Class is dismissed for the day at 3:45 p.m. The following graph demonstrates how time was spent on Wednesday, May 6, 2009, in Miss Brown's kindergarten.

Figure 7.4.

Time Spent in Eisenhower Elementary Kindergarten: Wednesday, May 6, 2009



Thursday, May 7, 2009. I arrive at 10:00 a.m. today due to obligations at my school. As I enter the room, the class is working at literacy centers and trying to complete all the worksheets assigned to them since Monday. Students refer to the word wall if needed, and Miss Brown circulates the classroom helping students. Miss Susan is wrapping up the yearend assessments with one student. Miss Brown's mother, Mrs.

Brown (a former kindergarten teacher), is also in the room helping students. Miss Brown (interview notes, November 17, 2009) explains how she monitors progress with each kindergartner:

I do a lot of informal assessments as well as formal assessments. In math, for example, we do direct instruction: then there is a partner activity, and then I do an informal assessment as a class. Then they go to a worksheet usually with a partner, and then finally at the end of class I will give them an assessment activity where I actually will grade it and file it in the cumulative file. The assessments are 50 percent teacher created and 50 percent standard from the specific programs we use. For math it tends to be from the Scott-Foresman series because that is what we are using for the dual language. We switch so often we have to be on the same lesson which is tricky. For content time using our IB programme those are almost all teacher created activities.

At 11:00 a.m. literacy centers are over, and math begins. Mrs. Brown introduces a game, *Sums of Ten*, with a deck of cards. The students immediately catch on and start playing with a partner. At 11:30 a.m. all kindergartners are in the lunchroom. At noon they are outside for recess.

It is a warm, sunny day, and children are enjoying their time outside. Today a few girls are dancing on the field. A game of *Sharks* (tag) is played, but otherwise the students are participating in similar activities from the previous days. At 12:30 p.m. all kindergartners are back in class and are playing *Sums of Ten*. At 12:50 p.m. the class exits the room for physical education and music. Both disciplines engage in playful approaches to learning. As the students are in specials, Miss Brown catches up on the day, makes telephone calls, and organizes her plans for the next day. The students return at 1:50 p.m. and begin working in their dinosaur packets.

At 2:05 p.m. the group switches. Miss Brown has the Spanish speakers today. Mrs. Brown works with a small group: they are working on rhyming words but have difficulty coming up with rhyming words because they have not yet acquired the language (e.g. What rhymes with grow? They do not yet have the word crow in their repertoire.) Miss Brown is working with the other half of the class on their *I Wonder* journals. They can write about anything they wonder about and illustrate it too. The groups switch so all students have the opportunity to do each activity.

At 3:05 p.m. free playtime begins. Four children have their heads down; two with blue apples and two with yellow apples. A few boys are actively engaged in Lego building, adding a track to the floor as a roadway. The language is somewhat similar to what I heard at Springs Elementary: school language. One boy wonders out loud, “Who is on my team? Who wants to be on my team, raise your hand? Who wants to use this piece? He can use it because he raised his hand first.”

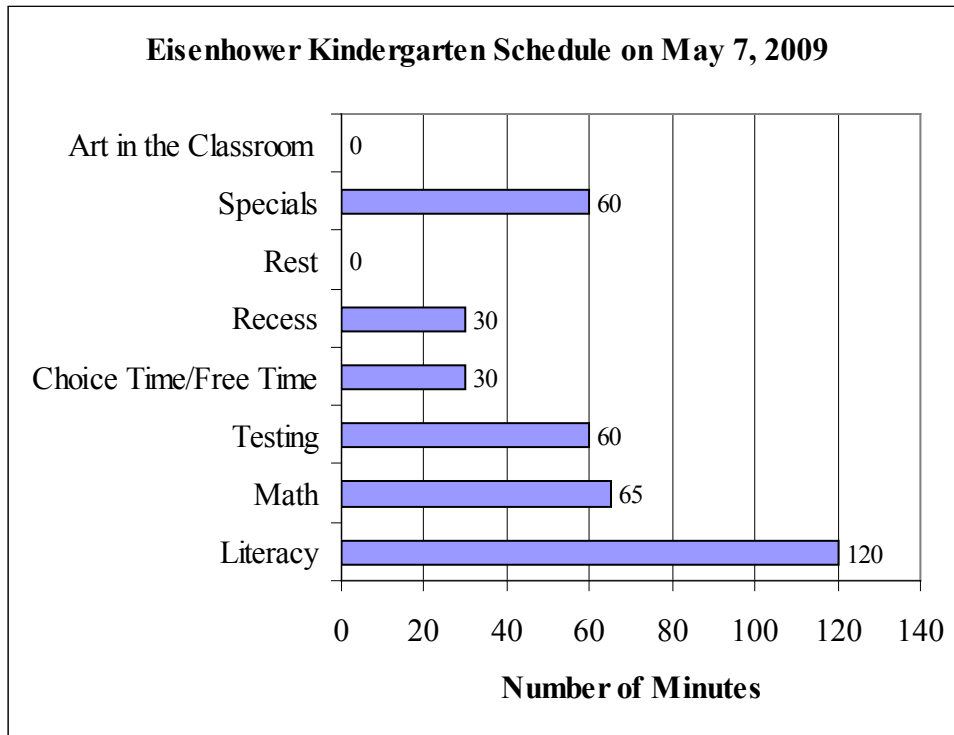
The boys are also overheard making non-word sounds. Soon they use the entire room, flying or driving their Lego creations everywhere as they make sounds. The conversation continues, and the boys begin negotiating the use of specific Lego pieces. The boys can be overheard saying, “That’s not fair. I win, you lose.”

Three girls have started drawing on white boards, and two girls are using scraps of paper to create art. They are engaged in constructive play. These two girls never speak to each other during the 30 minute free playtime. They seem to amuse and entertain themselves. Later I learn they are both only children.

Another group of three girls has started playing school. This lasts about one minute, and they switch to playing family. Their play is more imaginative and focuses on who should do what task. “You do this, You do that, I’m going to…” imitating animals, primarily with this group, dogs. Their play stays contained in the housekeeping area, never venturing outside the space designed for this activity. As students play, both English and Spanish are spoken.

Miss Brown meets with the two boys with the blue apples and talks over the apology notes they are required to write. Both boys are repeat offenders, as they each have had to write apology notes for the past three days. Free playtime ends at 3:35 p.m. with clean-up, pack up, and dismissal at 3:45 p.m. Mrs. Brown and I converse (field notes, May 7, 2009), and she states how different kindergarten is today: “Now in kindergarten it is all about books, reading, and worksheets. I remember kindergarten with buckets and tubs of manipulative materials and children sorting the objects, classifying the objects, and counting the objects. It is so different today.” The following graph highlights how time was spent in kindergarten on May 7, 2009.

Figure 7.5.
Time Spent in Eisenhower Elementary Kindergarten: Thursday, May 7, 2009



Kindergarten Curriculum at Eisenhower Elementary School

Eisenhower has the same length of day as Park and Springs Elementary Schools a long day for kindergarten students filled with various transitions and contact with multiple teachers. The printed kindergarten schedule that was given to me is as follows:

Eisenhower Elementary Kindergarten Schedule

- 8:45-9:15 Homeroom
- 9:15-9:55 Math
- 9:55-10:00 Snack
- 10:00-10:15 Recess
- 10:15 Switch

- 10:15-10:25 Show and Tell
- 10:25-11:25 Reading
- 11:25 Switch
- 11:30-11:55 Lunch
- 11:55-12:15 Recess
- 12:15-12:25 Rest Story
- 12:25-12:45 Content (switch half way through planners)
- 12:45-1:15 Media (Monday, Wednesday), Music (Tuesday), Physical Education (Thursday)
- 1:15-1:45 Art (Monday, Wednesday), Physical Education (Tuesday), Music (Thursday), Computer Lab (Friday)
- 1:45-2:00 Content
- 2:00 Switch
- 2:05-2:35 ESL/SSL (Monday and Tuesday), ESL (Wednesday-Friday)
- 2:35-3:05 Pack up and dismiss (Monday), Writing (Tuesday-Friday)
- 3:05-3:30 Explore Time (Tuesday-Friday)
- 3:30-3:45 Clean up and Pack Up (Tuesday-Friday)
- 3:45-3:50 Dismiss (Tuesday-Friday)

The students have media twice a week, music twice a week, physical education twice a week, and computer lab once a week. Spanish instruction is embedded throughout the day.

Mrs. North responded (interview notes, November 10, 2009) to “Does your school follow a specific kindergarten curriculum?” as follows:

We follow the school district standards that are based on our state standards. The Essential Learning Outcomes we have for our school district drive our curriculum. And from those we create our Programme of Inquiry that is the basis of the IB instruction. We take the ELOs and put them into action, integrated into the themes and inquiry approach to learning. Every teacher sits down with the Colorado Standards, the state standards that feed into the district ELOs, then they start to look at their Programme of Inquiry and from there start to develop units and from those units they develop lessons.

Language arts instruction is implemented through small groups at centers. Miss Brown reports that she has access to the Houghton-Mifflin curriculum materials but does not always follow them. Worksheets were the primary source of literacy practice I observed. The worksheets were from a variety of publishers. Zoo Phonics is also used at Eisenhower Elementary School. When asked how student progress is gauged, Miss Brown (interview notes, November 17, 2008) replied:

I use sight word tests, DIBELS (Dynamics Indicators of Basic Early Literacy), and DRA to test for literacy skills. A few selected students are evaluated for our gifted and talented program, and a few of our students do receive some testing for Lip’s and potential SST’s (Student Study team) for special education. Most of our benchmarks are through our DIBELS testing. We test students at the beginning of the year as well as through informal assessments that my teammates and I have created. Our assessments include testing letter recognition, number recognition, color recognition, and shapes recognition. We don’t test sounds at the beginning of the year because we are finding out the majority of our students don’t have that skill. We have a huge benchmark coming up in December for DIBELS where all the children need to know all their letters and sounds, all the blends, and are beginning to demonstrate understanding of word families. I am excited and a little anxious to see the progress they have made.

The district has adopted Scott-Foresman as the math curriculum, yet the program I observed being used in this kindergarten was *Stand Out Math*. The science and social

studies curriculums are woven throughout the PYP planners at Eisenhower. The planners for kindergarten are as follows: Schools, Trees, Families, Water All Around, Culture, and We Can Dig It. Eisenhower has been an IB school for five years, and the teachers have a solid understanding of how to plan, write, and implement the planners.

This is Miss Brown's first year as a kindergarten teacher. She taught first grade last year, and prior to that she taught Spanish in the middle school for a half year and spent the other half of the year teaching grades three and four in the Denver area. Miss Brown (interview notes, November 17, 2008) wonders how she can incorporate more free choice time into her schedule:

I feel the pressure of IB, PYP, dual language, the state standards, DIBELS testing, DRA testing. I mean it would be great to implement more playtime, but I just don't know how to other than the thirty minutes at the end of the day and two recesses. I think play is very important, I just need to learn more about it.

Miss Brown further elaborated:

I have many memories of kindergarten, I think in part because of my mother. She was a kindergarten teacher and taught kindergarten for 35 years. So, I kind of grew up around it. My kindergarten, personally, I remember an alphabet parade we had. We each had to be a letter and dress up with something to do with the letter. I had a cape with socks and was *Super Socks!* We also hatched ducks and chicks as a kindergarten class. That was one of my favorite memories of that age. I wish we did that, I really do. We had a bear we took home every week. One child took it home over the weekend and wrote about what experiences they had and what they did with the bear. We also had a week: All About Me; where we had a whole wall with just our pictures from home, what we liked, our favorite foods, our favorite colors, our favorite activities, and our favorite games. I remember a lot from kindergarten. I just loved it. I don't remember the work we did; I don't recall practicing writing letters or being at the reading table. I remember all those kind of fun, investigative inquiry kinds of things we did. It makes me want to do it in kindergarten now. I'm just not sure how to implement it and connect it to something.

Communication between home and the kindergarten classroom is through monthly newsletters written in both English and Spanish. There is an expectation that kindergarten students will have weekly homework assignments. Parents are asked to sign a Homework Contract statement that reads, “Yes, I would like my child to have kindergarten homework. I will help my child make sure that it is returned on time each week.” Homework assignments may be in the form of a phonics paper to complete, a math sheet to complete, or a story to read.

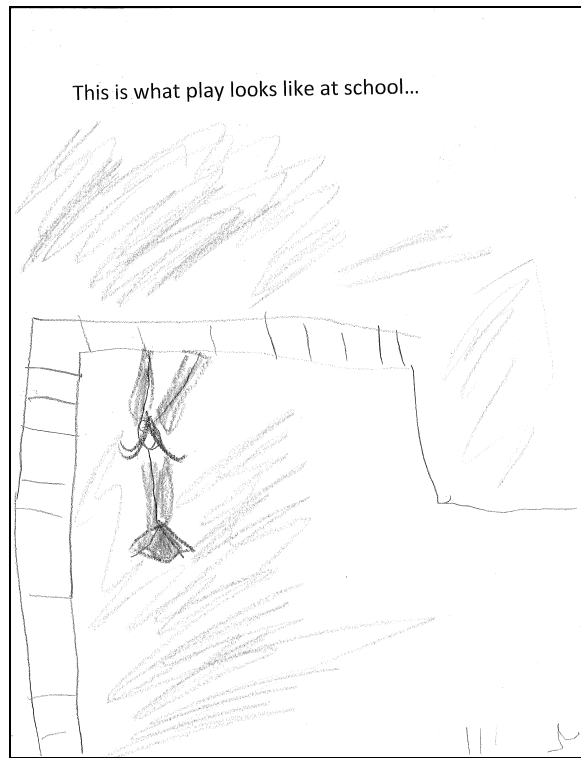
The school also promotes special evenings for families to come together at school to learn and celebrate the growth of all students. One example of this was the Language Fair held on May 7, 2009. (The event showcased all the students’ progress with their second language (either English or Spanish). The evening reminded me of Vandewalker’s (1917) account of the 1892 kindergarten programs in mining camps in which many of the children came to kindergarten with a language other than English as their first language; see page 37 above.)

The Kindergarten Voice from Eisenhower Elementary School

The kindergartners in Miss Brown’s class were interested as to why I was always following them writing in my notebook. They willingly came to work with me on May 7, 2009. I wondered how kindergartners themselves reflect upon or view the kinds (and amount) of play in which they engage within the school day. I worked one-on-one with students whose parents had given permission for them to work with me. In turn I asked each kindergartner if I could keep the artwork they created for me (a copy of the work

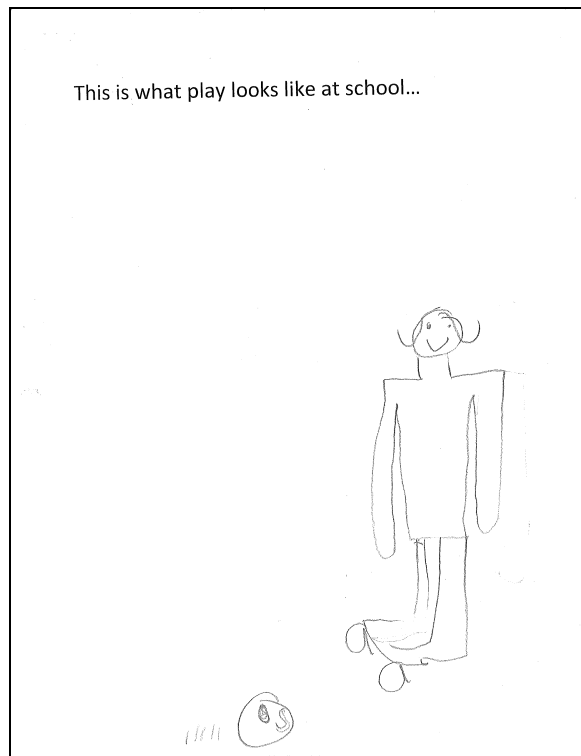
was given to each participant). Following are eight examples of the work collected on May 7, 2009:

Figure 7.6.
Mia's Illustration of Play in School



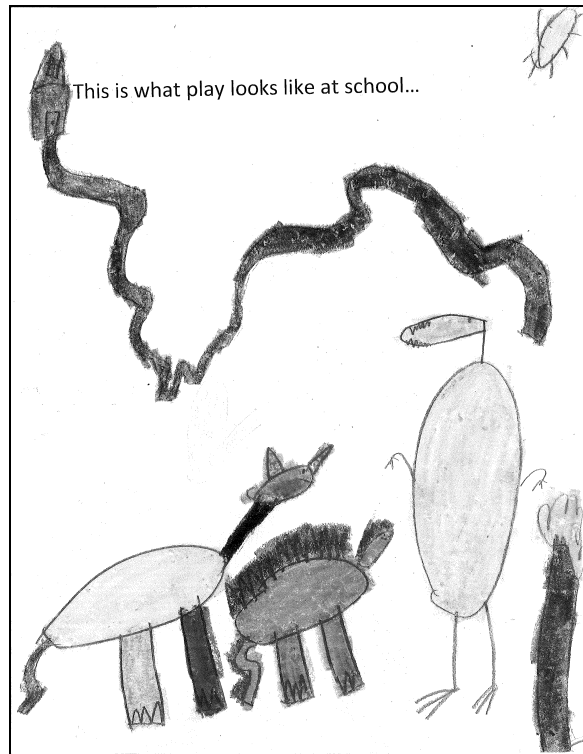
When asked what Mia (field notes, May 7, 2009) does in kindergarten she replied, “I play outside. I read books. I learn. I write. I do centers. I color and draw.” She proceeded to create her illustration and stated, “On the monkey bars, sometimes I play by myself.”

Figure 7.7.
Brenda's Illustration of Play at School



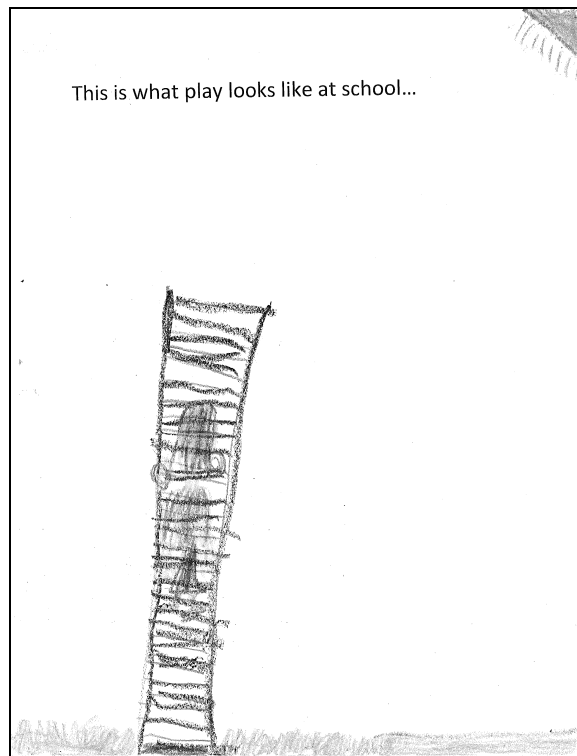
Brenda (field notes, May 7, 2009) told me that in kindergarten, “I play outside, and I learn inside. When I learn inside, I do math. This is me digging for worms.” Brenda and her friends spent much time digging for worms at recess. Brenda made a clear distinction between playing = outside and learning = inside.

Figure 7.8.
Jake's Illustration of Play at School



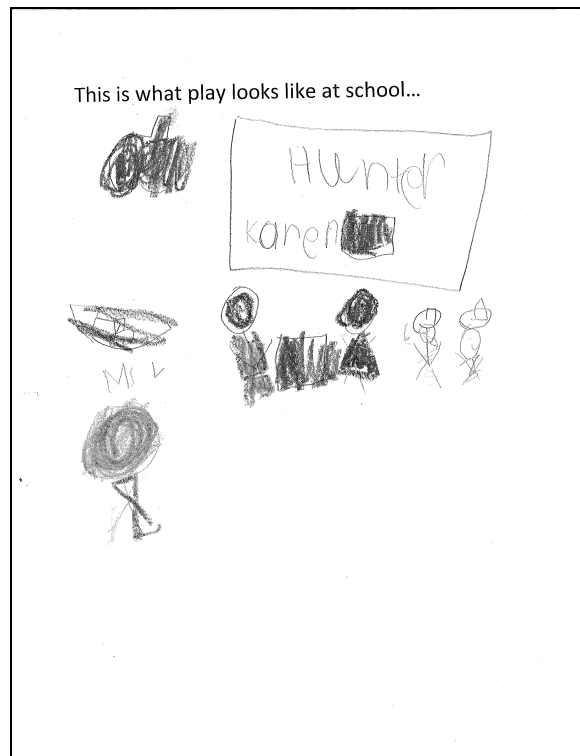
Jake's (field notes, May 7, 2009) response to my question was, "I play outside. I play dinosaurs, and I do some math! T-Rex is a carnivore, and he chases the other dinosaurs." His illustration depicts both carnivores and herbivores and a game he plays at recess.

Figure 7.9.
Maggie's Illustration of Play at School



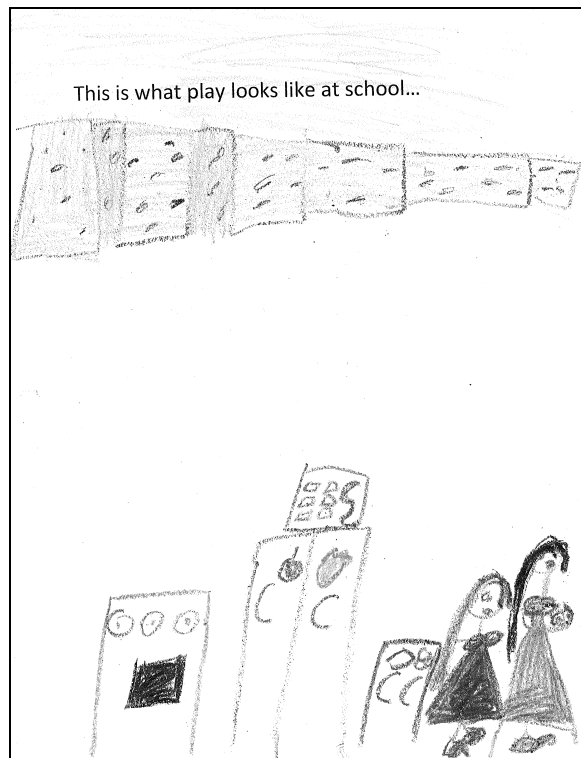
Maggie (field notes, May 7, 2009) shared that in kindergarten she writes, reads, and draws. “I learn a lot. I read books. I do the calendar. I have recess. I get along with my friends. I’ve learned a lot of sounds. I can read some words. When I play I do the monkey bars and swing on swings. I climb, and I dig for worms. I’m climbing when I play. I climb because I like to. It makes me feel good.” Maggie’s play could be classified as functional play.

Figure 7.10.
Harry's Illustration of Play at School



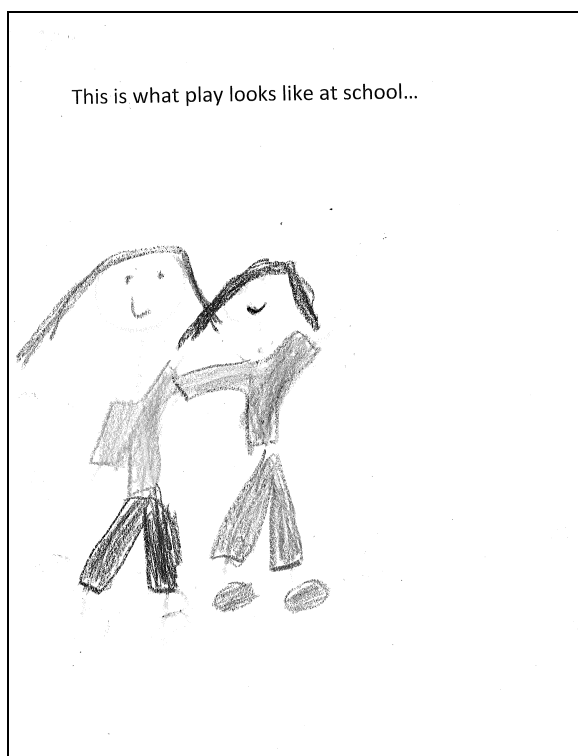
Harry (field notes, May 7, 2009) told me that in kindergarten, “I usually learn words, like the A, B, and C’s in Spanish. We work at tables. When I work I’m looking at words for my stories, and I do taking away and adding.” When asked, “What do you play in kindergarten?” Harry replied, “I play at free time with toys. My teacher picks where I play from that big chart.” His picture represents the chart that shows where children can play. It also has a red apple, the behavioral management technique used at Eisenhower Elementary School.

Figure 7.11.
Margaret's Illustration of Play at School



Margaret (field notes, May 7, 2009) told me that in kindergarten, “I play with my friend. I play tag. I play house with my friends. I play on the field with my other friends.” Margaret drew a picture of exactly what she did the day prior in the housekeeping area. Her picture includes the ceiling tiles. (None are missing from her illustration.) Dramatic play with friends is valued by Margaret.

Figure 7.12.
Noelle's Illustration of Play at School



Noelle drew a picture of a game of tag. Noelle (field notes, May 7, 2009) explained her thinking, "I play with my friends in kindergarten. I work, and I listen to my teacher too. And when I play, I play tag."

Figure 7.13.
Ricky's Illustration of Play at School



Ricky, (field notes, May 7, 2009) one of the youngest in the class shared that in kindergarten he likes to play “superheroes, dogs, dinosaurs, Superman, and X-man.” Ricky’s play reflects imaginative play and his illustration shows two boys playing superheroes on the playground. Ricky struggled with English in the classroom and often was unsure of the directions and expectations placed on him for seatwork but had no difficulty in playing at recess with his friends.

Chapter Eight: Summary, Discussion, and Future Studies

Let us open our kindergartens again to the world's most natural learning tool: play.

Vivian Gussin Paley

Summary

Kindergarten programs have been a part of America's educational landscape since 1856, when Margarethe Meyer Schurz opened the first kindergarten in Watertown, Wisconsin. (Altenbaugh, 2003). If we fast-forward 153 years to today, the landscape composition of kindergartens, the garden for children's play, has drastically changed. This stark transition, complex and many years in the making, can nonetheless be well represented in a single descriptive word drawn from a headline in the *New York Times Magazine* of May 3, 2009: *Kindergarten Cram*. The article's author proceeds to give an account on the "new kindergarten:"

When I was a child, in the increasingly olden days, kindergarten was a place to play. We danced the hokey-pokey, swooned in suspense over Duck, Duck, Gray Duck (that's what Minnesotans stubbornly call Duck, Duck, Goose) and napped on our mats until the Wake-Up Fairy set us free. No more. Instead of digging in sandboxes, today's kindergartners prepare for a life of multiple-choice boxes by plowing through standardized tests with cuddly names like Dibels (pronounced "dibbles"), a series of early-literacy measures administered to millions of kids; or toiling over reading curricula like Open Court, which features assessments every six weeks. (Orenstein, 2009)

A new report by the Alliance for Childhood entitled *Crisis in Kindergarten* (Miller & Almon, 2009) found that kindergartners from each coast participate in up to two or three hours per day in instruction and testing of literacy and math skills. This zero-

sum game means that these same children engage in 30 minutes per day (or far less) of play.

As a doctoral student and an educational researcher, I have gained much from my cohort over the last six years. Our first class in the summer of 2003 explored *A Nation Reformed?* (Gordon, 2003); twenty years prior I was working on my master's degree and was immersed in *A Nation at Risk* (1983). The educational pendulum has a way of swinging back and forth: educational policy changes taken to a national scale have always given me pause. All too often what we do in education has little or nothing to do with what we know is good pedagogy for children.

When pondering my dissertation topic, it became clear to me that I needed to learn firsthand of what I had heard from my cohort of the changing landscape in public kindergarten classrooms. This curiosity centered quickly on the fate of play as part of the kindergarten curriculum. I started to read more about NCLB and changing school policies surrounding high-stakes testing. This was all experientially foreign to me in the private sector of education. Then I started to wonder about the research of play and the value I always saw as inherent in that activity. As a former kindergarten teacher, I was immediately drawn into the foundation and the history of the kindergarten movement.

The purpose of this study can be stated simply: I set out to examine kindergarten play set against changing school policies and practices of recent years, and I did so with reference to a single Colorado school district. I believed that observation in kindergarten classrooms was imperative to learn firsthand just how *time* was being spent in the classroom and to learn if in fact *play* was disappearing from the kindergarten landscape

(and to speculate intelligently upon what that diminution might mean to the lives, minds, and developmental progress of children).

I selected a qualitative method to guide my work: Elliot Eisner's model of Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism. In keeping with the methodology, I decided to take the role of critic by answering the following four research questions.

1. What does kindergarten look like in this school district?
2. What is the current state of play in the kindergarten classroom?
3. Are teachers establishing practices responsive to the cognitive, social and emotional well-being of kindergartners, while at the same time adhering to the requirements of the district and/or state and federal government?
4. How do contemporary kindergartners themselves reflect upon or view the kinds (and amount) of play which they engage in within the school day?

Data was collected over eight months during the 2008-09 academic year; through that practice and compilation, certain themes began to emerge.

As we have seen sequentially, I first presented (Chapter One) the background information on the importance of play for kindergarten children and charted play's gradual decline in the daily school lives of American kindergartners. In the next chapter I presented a review of the literature on play. This chapter outlined the various theories and theorists on the topic from classical to modern to contemporary. The chapter also outlined the history of the kindergarten movement in the United States.

In Chapter Three, I described my qualitative research methodology and process, including the design, method of analysis, site selection, and limitations to the study. I

thought it was imperative in Chapter Four to outline the school district used in this study, Mountain View (a pseudonym), as many of the district initiatives have an impact on the kindergarten curriculum and individual kindergarten classrooms. In Chapters Five through Seven, I described what I had found in each of the three schools: Springs, Park, and Eisenhower.

In this final chapter, I answer the four research questions posed in Chapter One, by combining information from the research cited throughout the dissertation, along with new research, and with the data from my own research in Chapters Four through Seven. I then attempt to interpret the data, evaluate the data, and provide themes from the data.

Discussion

Research Question One: What does kindergarten look like in this school district?

Froebel's ideal, of kindergarten as a garden for children's play, has changed over the last century and a half due to myriad reasons, such as cultural, political, technological, and economic shifts.

One reason is the entire transfer of kindergarten from a private entity to the K-12 public education arena since World War II, including a mandated full-day kindergarten program in many states. Another change in kindergarten education can be credited to the move in educational policy, spurred on by the 1983 National Commission on Excellence in Education study, *A Nation at Risk*. The report received national attention with the claim of a "rising tide of mediocrity" in American public schools. The report called attention to the role of a weak curriculum, insufficient instructional time, poorly prepared teachers, and the lack of uniform expectations across the country. The 1980s saw the

metamorphosis (and institutional and political enforcement) of the standards movement. The standards movement was seen as an avenue to advance American students' performance in a world setting. Accordingly, the 1990s promoted high-stakes testing as a method of accountability for schools, districts, and states. Kindergartens were not targeted to comply with federal mandated testing but the reform initiatives in standards and high-stakes testing have clearly extended down to the kindergarten classroom.

As a result, more curriculum (much more) is presented to students at a younger age. We have become a nation of "curriculum obesity," a term a fellow educator Ellin Keene recently shared with me. Marzano (2003) in *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action* wrote:

If we assume that 5.6 hours each day are devoted to classroom time and 180 days are spent in school per year, then K-12 students spend about 13,104 total hours in class (13 years of instruction x 1,008 hours per year). Thus, teachers have a maximum of 13,104 hours to address the 200 standards and 3,093 benchmarks identified by the McRel researchers. (p. 24)

Given those statistics, the urge to "get it covered" was felt by each of the teachers in this study. This provoked an immediate pedagogical conundrum in the hearts and minds of educators: should content dictate the day, or should engaged and purposeful work dictate the day?

As stated previously, Mountain View is attempting district-wide full implementation of the International Baccalaureate Programme, as well as participation in the *Success for all Students (SFAS)*. The district has seen tremendous growth in English Learners over the past 15 years and is faced with the challenge of educating a new demographic of Latino children. The district has created Essential Learning Outcomes

(ELOs) for all teachers to follow and allows for creativity in site management. (E.g. Eisenhower is a dual language school, whereas Springs is not.) The district has pockets of varying demographics as indicated in the table below; each provide particular challenges, whether they be parental demands (as in Park) or a high percentage of non-English speakers (as in Eisenhower and Springs). The following table illustrates each site studied with pertinent information on each school.

Table 8.1.
Schools Involved in this Study

School	Title One	IB	Demographics
Springs	yes	in progress	50% non-white
Park	no	full implementation	5% non-white
Eisenhower	yes	full implementation	60% non-white

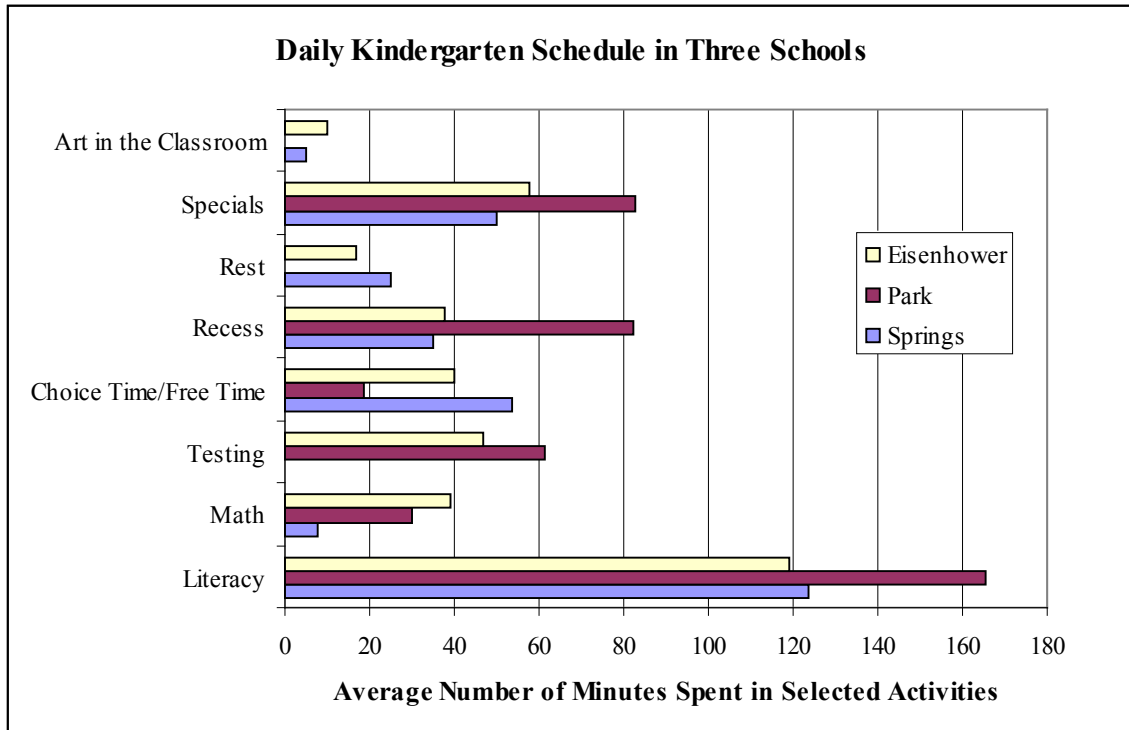
Instructional time has increased in kindergarten settings across the nation, and Mountain View School District is no exception to this trend. More time is dedicated to didactic, paper/pencil instructional activities, and less time is devoted to free play, exploration, and constructivist activities. The temporal equation is zero-sum and easy to grasp: as evident in the following graph, academics takes up more time in kindergarten, and consequently, play takes up less time. This is a problem. As Levin (1996) states, “Without rich and meaningful play, the whole process of actively transforming experience into meaningful cognitive knowledge can suffer” (p. 85).

It was reassuring to learn through this study that the kindergartners in all three sites had a recess period (15 to 20 minutes) devoted just to kindergarten students in

addition to up to two other recesses per day built into their schedule. A variety of teachers supervised all recesses at each site; the teachers were generally separated from students, and the only interaction was when conflict resolution intervention was needed. All sites had recess immediately following lunch. In all three sites, kindergartners were exposed to the same specials (physical education, music, art, computers, media, and Spanish) as the grade-one-through-grade-five community.

Throughout Chapters Five, Six, and Seven daily graphs were presented to show just how time was spent in the three kindergarten classrooms observed. The following graph averages the four days spent in each classroom and paints a picture of the daily schedule in each of the three schools. Literacy takes up the bulk of the day in each of the three schools observed. “Choice time” or “free time” is somewhat limited at both Park and Springs.

Figure 8.1.
Daily Kindergarten Schedule in Three Schools



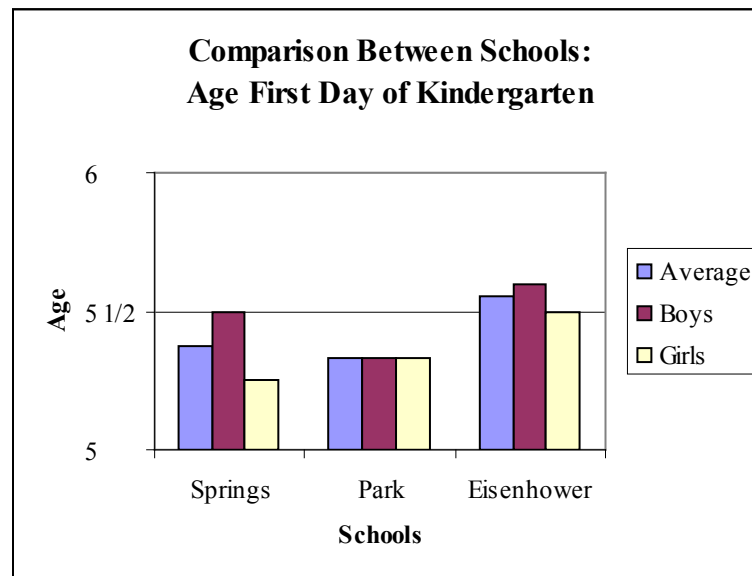
A mill levy, which was passed by the voters in this community in November 2007 to fund a full-day kindergarten program, was met with little or no opposition. Yet there was no mention of workshops for parents on the full-day kindergarten program and what changes would be made in the shift from a half-day to a full-day program. There was no mention of staff development in the area, neither of a full-day kindergarten program nor of staff development in the area of play. The only staff development trainings were on DIBELS assessments, IB implementation, and the *Success for all Students* grant.

In addition, one element of focus in this study was a close look at the entrance age of each kindergartner to determine if there was evidence of “red-shirting.” The following

graph depicts the three schools and the average age of starting kindergartners. There appears to be no evidence of “red-shirting” across the district.

Figure 8.2.

Comparison Between Schools: Age First Day of Kindergarten



The three schools approached curriculum in differing ways. The three sites often said that the curricular decisions were made based on the demographics of the specific school site. One similarity is that reading instruction was implemented in all three settings.

Three kindergarten teachers volunteered to participate in the study, Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Robinson, and Miss Brown. I had hoped for a more diverse cross-section of teaching experience to gather a variety of viewpoints on the changing landscape in kindergarten. In this case, one teacher had a wealth of experience while the other two were new to the profession. The following table represents the three teachers involved in the study.

Table 8.2.
Kindergarten Teachers Involved in this Study

Name	School	Education	Years in Teaching
Mrs. Wilson	Springs	BA	26
Mrs. Robinson	Park	MA	2
Miss Brown	Eisenhower	MA	3

Each teacher weaved her personality into the kindergarten classroom. The two younger teachers were much more didactically focused, whereas Mrs. Wilson had a more constructivist view on educational practices. Was that due to experience, training, or to philosophy? Mrs. Wilson often reminisced (nostalgically and wistfully, to my understanding) of the kindergarten classroom a decade ago when cooking and book making were major activities during the day, rather than assessments and reading instruction.

There appeared a significant disconnect between the kindergarten report card and what was being taught across the district in kindergarten. The report card makes no mention of the International Baccalaureate Programme or the IB attitudes, yet these were a focal point in each school I visited with walls dedicated to inquiry points and banners proclaiming the attitudes.

The report card asks kindergarten teachers to indicate progress (E= exceeds proficiency, P= proficient, W= working toward proficiency, N= not yet proficient and a blank = not applicable) through six domains: personal development (not the IB attitudes), literacy, emergent/early writing skills, mathematics, science, and social studies. The sub-

skills listed under each domain were not reflected in what I observed being taught, practiced, or required; they appear to be the minimum. Much more was required of the kindergarten students on the days I observed, which in literacy included: vowel work (both long and short sounds), phonics drills and worksheets, the ability to discern homophones and know which witch to use, work with rhyming words and word families, and blend work. Demonstration of mastery was through workbook activities and assessments. Scripted curriculum for reading instruction was not observed.

In viewing the results of Figure 8.1 on page 235, one can see that math took a backseat in kindergarten during my observation days. One school, Eisenhower, relied on a scripted math curriculum, *Stand Out Math* (Miller, 2003), whereas the other two settings used either worksheets downloaded from the internet or manipulative materials to express mathematical concepts; these practices again emphasized the differences in styles between the veteran teacher (constructivist) and the beginning teacher (didactic).

Again, a disconnect is present in what is reported to parents on the report card and what actually occurs during the school day. Students were asked to do much, much more than what is generally reported out, such as telling time by the hour, half hour, five-minute intervals (without the benefit of hands-on materials), and adding with flash cards.

The science and social studies portions of the report card list the following two categories as sub skills: “Understands and applies concepts,” and “Participates and demonstrates effort.” It appears as though this is a missed opportunity to report and educate the parents on the IB planners and the work done in those areas by each kindergartner.

Research Question Two: What is the current state of play in the kindergarten classrooms? In her book, *The Literate Kindergarten: Where Wonder and Discovery Thrive*, (2007) Kempton writes:

Twenty-five years ago, when I began teaching kindergarten, work and play maintained a peaceful balance in the classroom. By the end of the school year, five-and-six-year-olds were expected to be able to write their names and to identify letters and numbers, shapes and colors. But teachers placed at least as much emphasis on creating and then nurturing stimulating play environments. Playhouses, blocks, easels, and workbenches were as essential to the classroom as teaching ABCs and 123s. Today the emphasis has shifted. Kindergartens now look and feel like watered-down first-grade classrooms. (p. 1)

I found that to be true. Today's kindergarten classrooms feel different. The rigorous demands placed on both the kindergartners themselves, and their teachers have shifted the focus of the day to academics. Mrs. Wilson (interview notes, November 3, 2008) stated:

I'm teaching kindergarten but implementing a first grade curriculum and often to four year olds. Our cutoff date with the district is October 5. Many of my students have had no preschool experience. They don't know how to play, and with the curriculum I am to cover, they don't learn how to play in kindergarten. I worry about that.

Defining the construct of "play," had varying definitions for the teachers in this study. Recess was viewed strictly as recess: a break from the routines of the school day. Recess happened at least twice a day in each site, except on extremely cold and snowy days.

At recess children were engaged in the full spectrum of Smilansky's (1968) continuum of play. Students were observed in functional play (simply exercising) as illustrated by swinging, sliding, and crossing the monkey bars at all three sites. Students

were seen using constructive play (the child creates something) as illustrated by the water play at Park and the map to catch the leprechaun at Park, as well as two girls cutting paper at choice time at Eisenhower. Students were engaged in dramatic play (the child uses language to take on a pretend role) as illustrated in the housekeeping areas of two of the three sites, in playing Dinosaurs at Eisenhower, and in Todd's elaborate game of *King of the Wild* at Park. Few students were also observed using games-with-rules (child's play is secondary to a rearranged set of rules) as evident in the multiple variations of tag observed at all three sites. Often, recess was the only time children could imagine, play make-believe, and work through difficult concepts like carnivore and herbivore. Often, recess time was the only time during the day when children could practice the essential skills of give-and-take which Brown (2009) advocates as vital social skills for the present and the future.

Two sites, Springs and Park, spoke of convincing their principals of the need for recess time and playtime. Informants at Park also spoke of parental concerns that there was too much recess time and the students should be "working," not "playing." The usual debate then ensues as to the inherent value of play and the view that one (work) is good and the other (play) is bad. Pertinent hand-outs on kindergarten for parents never mentioned the value of play in kindergarten. I did share the American Academy of Pediatrics report (Ginsburg, 2006), *The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds* with Mrs. Robinson after our conversation regarding parental concern on too much recess time. She did upload it on her website for parents to read.

“Free time” or “choice time” in kindergarten was scheduled at the end of a long day and was not facilitated by teachers. Though each teacher spoke of the value of play, each teacher also spoke of the difficulty in trying to allow for play while keeping up with the demands of the district’s expectations for outcomes in kindergarten. Though all three teachers spoke of the value of play and learning, it was difficult for the two newer teachers to articulate the relationship between the two. Springs had their classroom play area in a prominent location in the room that appeared maintained by Mrs. Wilson. Eisenhower had the play area tucked into the back of the room. Park never used the play area, and it was hard to access.

Never did I observe a teacher enter into play with her students. I did not observe the changing of props based on play observations from the teacher. I did not observe the simple gesture of handing a child a pad of paper and pencil when she was in the housekeeping area answering the telephone encouraging her to “take a message.” This lack of facilitation can be interpreted as a “play problem” as well, in that Jones and Reynolds (1992) argue that if play does not get facilitated it does not get elaborated.

Jones and Reynolds (1992) go further to encourage teachers to take on the role of “stage manager,” providing props to the environment and then allowing children to create their own play through the props. Often, choices for free play were predetermined by the teacher as to what the child would “play” or which center he/she could use. Block play was limited within the kindergarten classrooms observed, and there was no sign of an easel for painting in any of the three classrooms. One afternoon a batch of play dough was offered to students as a vehicle for play.

At both Springs and Eisenhower, where at least 50 percent of the students spoke a language other than English at home, school language emerged at free choice time, often by boys playing with a set of Lego. “Raise your hand if you want a blue piece.” “I’m going to give this piece to someone who raises their hand.” Is this an illustration of consolidating language, skills, and concepts and beginning to own them? Certainly, I believe that providing students the last 30 minutes of a busy school day for play is better than none at all. The playtime of free choice time eased the transition from home to the more formal aspects of schooling and provided assimilation, especially at Springs and Eisenhower.

Pre-service and in-service trainings on play in kindergarten were lacking from all three teachers. Mrs. Wilson, (interview notes, November 3, 2008) the veteran teacher, had participated in the past in the Colorado Kindergarten Teacher Conventions and learned much about play through that venue a decade ago.

Play within the classroom did not appear to be viewed as a mode of learning, but rather as a break in the academic schedule. A common theme emerged as the teachers all spoke about wanting more play for their students. But where would the time come from? What would be sacrificed? Could these classrooms be set up for children to use play as an integral part of the concepts and skills taught during the day and minimize activities that teach skills and concepts in isolation or by rote? All three spoke of the pressure felt in trying to “cover it all.”

Research Question Three: Are teachers establishing practices responsive to the cognitive, social, and emotional well-being of kindergartners, while at the same time adhering to the requirements of the district and/or the state and federal government?

Kempton (2007) writes, “At a time when everyone from principals to state and federal regulators demands more proof of academic achievement, many teachers believe their only recourse is to compromise play in favor of more structured lessons” (p .4).

Clearly, that is what I observed in Mountain View School District: play has taken a back seat to academic preparation. Mountain View has seen tremendous growth in English Language Learners students over the past 15 years, changing the landscape of their school district and the need to educate all children. Yet should it be at the cost of cognitive, social, and emotional development of kindergartners? Could a compromise be met whereas play reenters the classroom and can actually enhance the learning of all students? Are we going about this entire accountability issue in the wrong direction? Should we reestablish classroom environments that sustain or even elaborate play to enhance language development (in all students regardless of what their first language is), develop settings which encourage cooperation, perspective taking, and sharing? Working toward mastery of basic reading and math skills at a younger age may come at the expense of learning other skills such as self-reliance, problem-solving, and spatial thinking. If we were to repeat Pellegrini’s (1980) study in 2009, *The Relationship Between Kindergartners’ Play and Achievement in Prereading, Language, and Writing*, would the results be the same? In the era of accountability we seem to create artificial ways of knowing what children know: we test, retest, and retest again, eliminating play as

the focal point in the classroom. If we were to create classrooms rich in play with natural venues for learning the basic academic skills, what would the results of those tests indicate? Through conversations with all kindergarten teachers within the district, teachers may be able to achieve a balance between mandated rigor and pedagogical flexibility.

Mrs. Wilson was candid when she shared in her interview that teaching kindergarten isn't the same as it was in the past. She is seriously considering the early retirement package offered to her by the district. It would be a loss if that were to happen.

Mrs. Wilson could be a mentor to new kindergarten teachers in the district and share her thoughts on constructivist education versus didactic teaching. Promoting dialogue between new teachers and veteran teachers may help create an environment in kindergarten that is more balanced. A book club of kindergarten teachers from across the district reading *The Literate Kindergarten: Where Wonder and Discovery Thrive* (Kempton, 2007) may help open a discussion on a more balanced kindergarten program. If deemed appropriate and right in Mountain View School District, when can conversations on a balanced approach in kindergarten happen? Two sites, Springs and Eisenhower, also house Head Start preschools. Olfman (2003) writes:

On January 16, 2003, the current administration announced that it is implementing a standardized assessment of all four-year-olds in Head Start programs nationwide to assess reading readiness, thus officially delivering "high-stakes" testing to preschoolers. In addition, the Early Care and Education Act, now before Congress, will give bonuses to states that demonstrate that their preschool programs are successfully teaching early literacy skills, necessitating even more academic pressure and wide-scale testing of preschoolers. (p. 2)

The conversation should include the preschool sector as well. All kindergarten teachers spoke (and taught) from the best of intentions, but all definitely feel the pressure to prepare their students for the rigors and demands of the pending CSAP assessment.

Research Question Four: How do contemporary kindergartners themselves reflect upon or view the kinds (and amounts) of play in which they engage within the school day? My favorite part of this process was the time spent watching and listening to the kindergarten students. As an observer in their schools, I was liberated from my own responsibilities and knowledge of individual children at my school and had the privilege to step back and watch play in action.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Smilansky's (1968) continuum of play was noted on the playground at recess and incorporated all four types of play: functional, constructive, dramatic, and games-with-rules. Recess was a time of play for the children; it provided the opportunity both for a release of energy and a resurgence of energy.

Playtime or choice time or free time in the classroom has been previously mentioned. It was at this time that I worked one-on-one or in small groups of two or three and asked students the following, "What does play look like at school?" I coded the responses first by recess versus classroom play. How do kindergartners themselves view the value of play in their school day? According to King (1979), we as educators define the play construct for children. I wanted to see how kindergartners themselves would define the construct from their point of view and what meaning it held for them. I also wondered if contemporary kindergartners, given all we have discussed thus far in their

environments, would engage in dramatic play as often as children did for Pellegrini in 1980.

Mrs. Wilson at Springs Elementary School consistently allocated playtime at the end of the day; she could articulate the value of play for kindergartners and advocated to have both recess and playtime daily. A student from her class responded, “Play is at the end of the day in kindergarten.” Another student noted, “You play in kindergarten but not in first grade.” One student articulated, “I am playing with shapes because I want to learn about shapes.” She made the direct link that through play one can learn and practice academic skills. By simply providing students more links to learning with play activities, this classroom may create a more balanced approach to learning.

Eleven of Mrs. Wilson’s students responded that play occurs within the classroom and two responded that play occurs at recess time. Upon closer observation of the drawings made by the children, one fell into the category of functional; three fell into the category of constructive; nine fell into the category of dramatic and zero fell into the category of games-with-rules. The students in her care used much vocabulary in their play, testing out words they had heard throughout the day, consolidating their own vocabulary skills. Mrs. Wilson’s results paralleled the results found by Pellegrini (1980).

Mrs. Robinson at Park Elementary School had recess up to three times a day and little classroom free time or playtime. One of her students responded that play occurs in the classroom, and 16 responded that play occurs at recess time. One child, Todd, who was creative in his play on the playground with *King of the Wild*, was adamant in his response, “We don’t play games in the classroom.” Upon closer observation of the

drawings made by the children, 11 fell into the functional category; one fell into the constructive category; four fell within the dramatic category; and one fell into the games-with-rules category. Mrs. Robinson's results were different from Pellegrini's results of 1980; her students were much more functional in their play. Was this due to the fact that their classroom was much more workbook driven and they needed a release of energy at recess time? Or was it due to the fact they had very little free time or choice time within the classroom setting?

Recess at Park was viewed as an opportunity to enjoy the fresh mountain air; engaged in gross motor activity, as indicated by the amount of students whose drawings indicated functional activities; and play in puddles, and on snow banks. Kindergarten teachers as observers of children's play may want to incorporate more props on the playground to encourage students to move from the functional category to the constructive and dramatic categories. By thinking through how to sustain or elaborate play by placing buckets, ships, corks, and shovels out by the water, more of that play may occur. With guidance from an observant teacher, kindergartners can use their imaginative play to make sense of the world around them.

Earning playtime in kindergarten seems to be contradictory to the entire kindergarten experience, especially when the youngest of children at school are enduring a long day of academics. Again, creating a balanced approach may serve the children and their teachers well. Denying that playtime or choice time denies a child the practice of exercising emergent and essential social skills.

Miss Brown at Eisenhower Elementary School, where the school is set up to be a dual language school, also had playtime or free choice time set up for the end of the day. Regretfully, due to the apple system in the school, many students did not get the chance to participate in free play based on their behaviors of the day. Were their behaviors caused because of the academic set-up of the day and the lack of free play? At Eisenhower free choice was often dictated by the teacher. As one student responded, “The chart tells you where you can play. My teacher picks where I play.” Often, playtime can look and sound “messy.” In order to let free time happen naturally, a teacher often has to relinquish control.

Thirteen students responded that play happens at recess, and six responded that play happens within the kindergarten classroom walls. This class had the most equal representation on the continuum; four functional, three constructive, nine dramatic and three games-with-rules. It also paralleled Pellegrini’s findings of 1980. Was this distribution because it was at the end of the school year, and students had matured and were starting to play more games-with-rules?

There were snapshots during my observational days where children were constructing knowledge as they engaged in a rich and creative play process — but they were few and far between. Kindergarten is the perfect setting for composing a garden for children’s play. It is at this time that children develop their confidence and the cultivation of life-long learning. The classroom environment needs to express and radiate wonder, surprise, awe, and serendipity. Kindergartners need play in their daily schedule.

I recommend that Mountain View School District seriously consider the importance of play in their kindergarten program. Based on the literature review in this study, coupled with observation in three classrooms, kindergartners need time to play and try things through repetition and then variation. In turn they encounter (assimilate) something novel or unexpected. This experience does not fit what they know. They then experience disequilibrium. They then try to figure out or master the new content by accommodating their current thinking into new thinking. They learn something new and reach a state of equilibrium. The cycle is then repeated when another challenge is encountered. Throughout this entire process they learn new language; learn to take risks; learn to give and take; learn to negotiate; work through complex concepts, emotions, and fears; and learn to problem solve. Could classroom environments in Mountain View School District be structured to allow for playful ways of learning rather than the myriad worksheets completed by kindergartners? It may be that through play in thoughtfully planned, rich social environments that students will be able to meet the rigors placed on them. If we are to become the nation Pink (2005) describes in *A Whole New Mind* (the “imagination economy”), one wonders how we can get there without creativity and play in schools.

Policymakers have overlooked the wealth of research that young children learn best in environments rich with imaginative play and playful learning, where children participate in choosing their hands-on activities and teachers help them build on those experiences rather than following didactic curricula designed to improve test scores. The garden has decomposed, and instead the first year of formalized schooling in America is

filled with academics and busy seatwork. As Vivian Gussin Paley eloquently wrote in the afterword in *Crisis in the Kindergarten* (2009), “Let us open our kindergartens again to the world’s most natural learning tool: play” (p. 61).

Future Studies

In the age of accountability and the push for academics at a younger age, how have preschools coped with this shift? One might consider this area to explore for further research. Replicate Pellegrini’s 1980 study, *The Relationship Between kindergartners’ Play and Achievement in Prereading, Language, and Writing*. What might the results be in 2009?

It certainly comes as no surprise to this researcher that the work provokes as many new questions as we began at the initiation of the project. These questions are as troubling as they are important. For example, in the era of accountability and academics in kindergarten, has aggression been on the rise in kindergarten classrooms? Have retention rates increased due to the standards set in kindergarten today? What do students leaving college or university know about the value of play? Would play look different in an independent kindergarten classroom as compared to a public kindergarten classroom? Waldorf Schools have long supported a playful environment, would play look different in that environment as compared to a public school kindergarten setting? And, if we are as I suspect, de-valuing play across the entire spectrum of the society, from our youngest community members up to the oldest, what is lost and what is at risk?

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Appendix A

Conceptual Framework

Educational Connoisseurship

Following is an outline of the conceptual framework that was used to provide a structure and guide me in the collection of data using Elliot Eisner's model of Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism. It includes five dimensions, under which the strategies that were used to collect data are listed.

The Intentional Dimension

- Interviews with the superintendent, curriculum director, principals, and teachers.
- Review of written documents on program structures, overviews of kindergarten curriculum, interpretation of NCLB for Summit County School District, handouts to kindergarten parents on the structure and purpose of kindergarten, and parent handbooks.
- Review of staff development in the area of play in kindergarten and NCLB.
- Review any speaker series offered by the district to parents.
- Review parent education sponsored by the school district.
- Reviews the school district mission statement and the mission statement of each school site.
- Review the aims and goals of the school district and each individual site (and how these goals pertain to NCLB)

The Structural Dimension

- Review the structure of the day at each site.
- Review the routines established.
- Review rites of passage: what is celebrated?
- How is time and space used in the kindergarten classroom and the playground?
- How are objects used within the classroom?
- What is the length and frequency of recess, or classroom playtime?
- Who supervises recess, choice time within the classroom?
- What types of play occur within the classroom and playground setting?
- How does play get facilitated?
- What is the range of ages within each kindergarten class (any evidence of red-shirting)?

The Curricular Dimension

- Observations and interviews with kindergarten students, kindergarten teachers, and principals.
- Interviews with the superintendent and curriculum director.

- How is NCLB interpreted for kindergarten?
- What are the goals of kindergarten within the district and at each site?
- Is there a dedicated play area within the classroom space?
- Who decides what is to be played?
- What are children doing?
- What type of play is occurring? Functional? Constructive? Dramatic? Games-with-Rules?
- Who is doing the work?
- What is the duration of the play?
- Is there any evidence of integration of curriculum objectives and play?
- How is growth demonstrated?
- How is growth shared with parents?
- What is the current state of report cards or grading systems within the district?
- Variation between school sites?

The Pedagogical Dimension

- What are the teaching styles within each kindergarten setting?
- What is the range of teacher experience?
- What is the primary instructional mode within each kindergarten setting?
- What is the intention of play within the kindergarten classroom setting?
- What is the belief on play (and is it valued)?
 - From the superintendent
 - From the curriculum director
 - From each individual principal
 - From each individual kindergarten teacher
 - From individual kindergartners themselves

The Evaluative Dimension

- How are kindergarten teachers evaluated in Mountain View School District?
- Collection of formal evaluation data from observations and interviews.
- Archival data of district information.
- What tools are used to evaluate kindergarten students' growth?
 - What is tested?
 - Are different ways of knowing valued? Encouraged?
 - Are play-based observations and assessments used?
 - If so, how does the teacher, principal, curriculum director, or superintendent use this data?
 - How is it reported to parents?
 - How is it reported to students?

Appendix B

Conceptual Framework/Educational Criticism

Description

- Collect data from all sources
- Structural corroboration (multiple data sources)
- Write narrative of the data
- Through process understand, interpret, appraise educational phenomena

Interpretation

- Take narrative from dimension one (description), and begin to apply meaning to it.
- How? Why? Explain patterns.
- If patterns emerge, derive from the story then work to create meaning from it.
- Weave in theory, if pertinent, to provide an interpretive framework to account for what has been described.

Evaluation

- Appraise experiences that have been described and interpreted
- Imagined?
- Use multiple data sources
- Look at various perspectives
- Use documents, archival information, observation, artifacts, interviews
- Structural corroboration (multiple data sources)

Thematics

- Use three previous dimensions
- Build upon analysis of data
- From particulars create analysis based on themes

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Interview Questions: Kindergarten Teachers

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. How many of those years have been in the kindergarten classroom?
3. What is your educational background?

Where did you complete your degree (s)?

Have you had specific training on play and young children?

4. Do you follow a specific kindergarten curriculum?

Have you received training in implementing this curriculum?

What is your weekly schedule?

What programs do you implement?

How do you gauge student progress?

How is progress reported to parents?

5. If participant has taught kindergarten for longer than five years, how has the kindergarten curriculum changed over time?

6. How are you implementing No Child Left Behind in the school district?

How are you implementing NCLB in your school building?

How are you implementing NCLB In your classroom?

Have you received training in how to implement the mandate within your classroom? Do kindergartners have targeted benchmarks to show progress?

Are play-based assessments used?

7. Is there vertical alignment between kindergarten, first, and second grades? What does it look like?

8. Do kindergarten students have time for free play within the classroom setting (frequency and length of time provided)?

9. How often do your students have recess?

Who supervises recess?

10. What is your role in play development of kindergartners? How is play facilitated?

11. What have you learned from observing play in kindergartners?

Interview Questions: Principals

1. How many years have you been in education? (Both as a teacher and as an administrator. What grades did you teach?)

2. How many of those years have been in the kindergarten classroom?

3. What is your educational background?

Where did you complete your degree (s)?

Have you had specific training on play and young children?

4. Does your school follow a specific kindergarten curriculum?

Have teachers received training in implementing this curriculum?

How do you gauge student progress?

How is progress reported to parents?

How do you evaluate kindergarten teachers?

5. If participant has been in education for longer than five years, how has the kindergarten curriculum changed over time?

6. How are you implementing No Child Left Behind in the school district?

How are you implementing NCLB in your school building?

How is NCLB implemented in your kindergarten?

Has your faculty received training in how to implement this law within your classroom? Do kindergartners have targeted benchmarks to show progress?

Are play-based assessments used?

7. Is there vertical alignment between kindergarten, first, and second grades? What does it look like?

8. Do kindergarten students have time for free play within the classroom setting (frequency and length of time provided)?

9. How often do your students have recess?

Who supervises recess?

10. What do your kindergarten parents have to say about current kindergarten practices?

Interview Questions: Curriculum Director

1. How many years have you been in education? (Both as a teacher and as an administrator. What grades did you teach?)

2. How many of those years have been in the kindergarten classroom?

3. What is your educational background?

Where did you complete your degree(s)?

Have you had specific training on play and young children?

4. Does your school follow a specific kindergarten curriculum?

Why were these curriculums chosen?

Have teachers received training in implementing this curriculum?

How do you gauge student progress using these curriculums?

How is progress reported to parents?

5. If participant has been in education for longer than five years, how has the kindergarten curriculum changed over time?

6. How are you implementing No Child Left Behind in the school district?

How is NCLB implemented in your kindergarten?

Has your faculty received training in how to implement this law within the classroom? Do kindergartners have targeted benchmarks to show progress?

Are play-based assessments used?

7. Is there vertical alignment between kindergarten, first, and second grades? What does it look like?

8. Do kindergarten students have time for free play within the classroom setting (frequency and length of time provided)?

9. How often do your students have recess?

Who supervises recess?

10. What do your kindergarten parents have to say about current kindergarten practices?

Interview Questions: Superintendent

1. How many years have you been in education? (Both as a teacher and as an administrator. What grades did you teach?)
2. How many of those years have been in the kindergarten classroom?
3. What is your educational background?

Where did you complete your degree(s)?

Have you had specific training on play and young children?

4. Does your school follow a specific kindergarten curriculum?

Why were these curriculums chosen?

Have teachers received training in implementing this curriculum?

How do you gauge student progress using these curriculums?

How is progress reported to parents?

5. If participant has been in education for longer than five years, how has the kindergarten curriculum changed over time?

6. How are you implementing No Child Left Behind in the school district?

How is NCLB implemented in your kindergarten?

Has your faculty received training in how to implement this law within the classroom? Do kindergartners have targeted benchmarks to show progress?

Are play-based assessments used?

7. Do kindergarten students have time for free play within the classroom setting (frequency and length of time provided)?
8. How often do your students have recess?

Who supervises recess?

9. What do your kindergarten parents have to say about current kindergarten practices?

10. Have you had specific educational opportunities for parents in early childhood education?

11. What do your stakeholders have to say about moving from a ½ kindergarten program to a full-day kindergarten program?

Appendix D

Invitation to Participate in Research

Superintendent, Curriculum Director, Principals, and Teachers

I, Debra Jean Deverell, am conducting a study to examine kindergarten children's play set against changing school policies and practices of recent years. I would appreciate your help by participating in an interview that will take approximately one hour of your time. Dr. Elinor Katz, of the University of Denver is supervising the research. This consent was approved by the University of Denver's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects on October 14, 2008.

The purpose of this study is an examination of kindergarten children's play set against changing school policies and practices of recent years. The superintendent, curriculum director, principals, and teachers will be interviewed at four elementary schools in *Mountain View School District*. The results of the interviews will be compiled and main themes will be identified.

The risks of this study appear to be minimal. Some of the questions asked will involve personal opinions about your perspective and insights on kindergarten children's play; kindergarten curriculum; and the current structure of a kindergarten school day. You will have the option to participate or not in the answering of any question. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. I respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from the participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you agree to participate in the interview, I will keep your opinions, thoughts, and responses confidential. The information, opinions, and insights that you provide to the interview questions are private and will be used for research purposes only. In fact, your name will not appear on any response forms. Only group responses and general trends will be reported so that you cannot be identified. The data and information that is gathered in this study might help to provide *Mountain View School District* information on their current practices in the kindergarten setting. It may also help the school district with future decisions regarding kindergarten curriculum, programming in kindergarten, and staff development.

Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation will not affect you in any foreseeable manner. You have the right not to answer any questions asked. If you have concerns, questions, or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Dr. Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (303) 871-3454, or

Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Sponsored Programs at (303) 871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, “(De)Composing a Garden for Children’s Play.” I appreciate your time, insights, candor and opinions. You are a valuable part of this study!

Sincerely,

Debra Jean Deverell

Appendix E

Informed Consent

Superintendent, Curriculum Director, Principals, Teachers

I, _____, have been invited to participate in a study of “(De)Composing a Garden for Children’s Play.” I am aware that the information I provide Debra Jean Deverell will be used in her dissertation research. I understand the purpose of the study is to examine, in a qualitative format, kindergarten children’s play set against changing school policies and practices of recent years. I understand that in order to fulfill the examination, an interview will not take more than an hour of my time. I understand that any interview and observation data will be submitted to me for review and that I may offer suggestions for revision if I find the data not to be accurate in my perceptions and experience. This consent was approved by the University of Denver’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research on October 14, 2008.

I know I can reach Debra Jean Deverell if I have questions. I understand Dr. Elinor Katz, Ph.D., Professor, College of Education at the University of Denver will supervise the study. If I have any questions or concerns regarding the study, I know I can reach Dr. Katz.

I am also aware that my participation is entirely voluntary and I am free to withdraw my consent and participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. Also, my name or personal identify will not be intentionally revealed in any written documents or oral presentations. All school data, interview responses, and other documents will be secured in Debra Jean Deverell’s home office.

Although this study does not address the following, I have been informed that there are two limits to the promise of confidentiality: If information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect the law requires that this be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena.

If I have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, or my rights as a research participant, I may contact Dr. Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (303) 871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Sponsored Programs at (303) 871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

I have read and understand the foregoing descriptions of Debra Jean Deverell's study entitled, "(De)Composing a Garden for Children's Play." I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in the study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form. Debra Jean Deverell has the original copy. Thank you very much for your time, observations, insights, and voluntary participation in this study.

Signature _____ Date _____

☐ I agree to be audio taped.

☐ I do not agree to be audio taped.

Signature _____ Date _____

_____ I would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to me at the following postal or e-mail address:

Appendix F

Parent Permission Letter

Dear Parents,

Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by Debra Jean Deverell, as a requirement for completion of her Ph.D., at the University of Denver. The purpose of this research is to examine kindergarten children's play set against changing school policies and practices of recent years. This study will last from the end of October through April, 2009. This permission letter was approved by the University of Denver's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research on October 14, 2008.

There are not foreseeable risks for students participating in this study. In fact, there will be no changes from your child's current kindergarten program. The study will consist of me observing your child as he/she plays at the school and recording what type of play activities they engage in. I will also meet with students in small groups and ask them to draw pictures for me of what play looks like in kindergarten. All students will continue to participate in the exact routines and instruction as has been taking place since the start of the school year. I am hopeful that this research will add new data to the field of education and *Mountain View School District*.

All names and data collected will remain confidential, including video tapes. I will be the only person with access to this data and the data will only be used for the intended purpose. All names and identifying information will be changed when findings are reported.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled. You may discontinue your child's participation in this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled.

If you have questions about this study, feel free to contact me or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Elinor Katz. If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the research, please contact Dr. Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (303) 871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Sponsored Programs at (303) 871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

Sincerely,

Debra Jean Deverell

Please return one copy of the following consent form and keep the rest for your records.

I have read and understand the foregoing descriptions of the research project titled, “(De) Composing a Garden for Children’s Play.” I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand.
I agree to have my child participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

I understand that there are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. If information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena.

Please print:

(Child’s name)

(Parent’s Signature)

- ☐ I agree to have my child be video taped.
- ☐ I do not agree to have my child be video taped.

Parent Signature

- ☐ I agree to have my child draw a picture of play in the kindergarten classroom.
- ☐ I do not agree to have my child draw a picture of play in the kindergarten classroom.

Parent Signature

Appendix G

Carta de permiso

Estimados padres,

Le invitó a su niño a participar en un estudio investigativo guiado por Debra Jean Deverell, MA. , como requisito para cumplir su título de Doctora en filosofía de la Universidad de Denver. El propósito de la investigación es examinar el juego de los niños del jardín de infancia y contrastarlo con los cambios de prácticas y normas escolares en los años recientes. Esta investigación durará desde abril hasta los finales del año escolar en junio, 2008.

No hay riesgos previsibles para los estudiantes participando en la investigación. De verdad, no habrá ningunos cambios del Programas normal de su niño. La investigación consistirá en la observación de su niño por mi parte cuando su niño está jugando en la escuela y tomaré apuntes sobre el tipo de actividades en las cuales está tomando parte. También reuniré con los estudiantes en grupos pequeños para pedirles a dibujarme dibujos de cómo se ve el juego en el kínder. Todos los estudiantes continuarán a participar en las rutinas diarias y la enseñanza normal como había tomado lugar desde hace los principios del año escolar. Espero que esta investigación añada nuevos datos al campo educativo y al Mountain View School District por demostrar que hay métodos apropiados por el nivel de desarrollo del niño a aprender por el juego en vez de solamente las actividades de papel y lápiz dentro del salón de clases.

Todos los nombres y la información recogida quedarán confidenciales, incluyendo las grabaciones de audio y video. Seré la única persona con el acceso a los datos y solamente se usará aquella información para el propósito original. Todos los nombres y la información de identidad serán cambiados cuando haga el reportaje sobre los resultados.

La participación en la investigación es voluntaria, y si se niega participar no habrá ninguna consecuencia negativa ni una pérdida de beneficios a los cuales su niño tiene derecho. Además, se puede revocar la participación de su niño en la investigación en cualquier momento sin consecuencias negativas.

Si tiene Ud. preguntas sobre la investigación, por favor llame o mi supervisor, Dra. Elinor Katz. Si tiene Ud. algunas preocupaciones o quejas sobre la manera en la cual se estaba tratado durante la investigación, por favor póngase en contacto con Dra. Susan Sadler, Director, Consejo del repaso institucional para la protección de los seres humanos, al (303)871-3454, o Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Oficina de los Programas patrocinados al (303)871-4052, o escriba una carta a la Universidad de Denver, Oficina de los Programas patrocinados, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

Atentamente,

Debra Jean Deverell

(Por favor, devuelva una copia de esta carta de permiso y se queda con el resto de la información para sus archivos.)

Yo he leído y entiendo las descripciones de la investigación titulado “(De)Composing a Garden for Children’s Play” (“Creando un jardín de juego para los niños”). Yo le he pedido a la persona de contacto una explicación satisfactoria de cualquier parte del lenguaje que no entendía completamente. Estoy de acuerdo con la participación de mi niño en esta investigación, y entiendo que puedo renunciar el consentimiento en cualquier momento. He recibido una copia de esta carta de permiso.

Entiendo que hay dos excepciones a la promesa de confidencialidad. Si hay información revelada que tiene que ver con la suicida, el homicidio, o el maltrato o desatentamiento del niño, es un requisito legal que se lo denuncia a las autoridades apropiadas. Además, si hay información en la investigación que es un tema de un mandato del tribunal o citación legal, es posible que la Universidad de Denver no pueda evitar conforma con el mandato o citación legal.

(Nombre del niño)

(Firma del padre)

- Estoy de acuerdo y doy permiso para la grabación de video de mi niño.
- NO estoy de acuerdo y NO doy permiso para la grabación de video de mi niño.

(Firma del padre)

- Estoy de acuerdo y doy permiso para la grabación de audio de mi niño.
- NO estoy de acuerdo y NO doy permiso para la grabación de audio de mi niño.

(Firma del padre)

- Estoy de acuerdo y doy permiso para que mi niño pueda dibujar un dibujo del juego en la clase del jardín de la infancia.
- NO estoy de acuerdo y NO doy permiso para que mi niño pueda dibujar un dibujo del juego en la clase del jardín de la infancia.

(Firma del padre)

Appendix H

Assent Form

Assent Form

University of Denver

**I, _____ give permission to Debra Jean Deverell to
use my drawing in her research study.**

Yes, _____

No, _____

For researcher use only:

Date: _____

School site: _____

Appendix I

Draw and Write Technique

This is what play looks like at school...